



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

WEDNESDAY — 10 Nov 2021



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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	11/10 Covid cost LAFD \$22M overtime, backfills
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-11-10/lafd-has-spent-22-million-on-covid-related-overtime-backfilling-shifts-of-sick?utm_id=41719&amp;sfmc_id=1843613">https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-11-10/lafd-has-spent-22-million-on-covid-related-overtime-backfilling-shifts-of-sick?utm_id=41719&amp;sfmc_id=1843613</a>

## GIST

The Los Angeles Fire Department has spent more than \$22.5 million on overtime related to COVID-19, much of it to backfill the shifts of employees who fell ill or had to quarantine after an exposure to the virus, data reviewed by The Times show.

The numbers underscore the toll that the coronavirus is taking on Fire Department staffing amid a battle over the city mandate that employees receive vaccinations. Only about 70% of LAFD workers have been fully vaccinated, and some firefighters and union officials have warned of major staffing problems if large numbers of personnel refuse to comply with the mandate.

But the data, which The Times obtained under the California Public Records Act, show the lost time due to COVID-19 illness is already substantial, accounting for more than 400,000 hours of work completed between March 2020 and Oct. 9 of this year.

While firefighters and their union have sued over the mandate and [warned of slowed response times if it is implemented in full](#), far less has been said about these ever-growing costs of an undervaccinated workforce — which medical experts and ethicists said is a mistake.

“One of the things we ignore is, what’s the burden of people being sick and being out? That doesn’t seem to be tabulated or at least expressed clearly in all of the discussions about city workers refusing to be vaccinated,” said Arthur Caplan, director of the division of medical ethics at New York University’s Grossman School of Medicine. “Not only are they burdening us with the threat of spreading disease, but selfishly they are burdening the taxpayer with the cost of having to fill in for them.”

Dr. John Swartzberg, a clinical professor emeritus of infectious diseases and vaccinology at UC Berkeley’s School of Public Health who has long taught on infectious disease and vaccine hesitancy, said national and international corporations he has advised through the pandemic have already reached the conclusion that vaccination mandates are not only good public policy but good for business — specifically because they reduce the costs associated with managing quarantines and paying for overtime.

The same reasoning applies to public agencies, he said.

“It’s going to allow them to have a stable workforce, and that stable workforce is created in part because you won’t have so many people going out on quarantine, and far fewer people going out ill,” Swartzberg said.

Cecile Aguirre, a fiscal systems specialist with the Fire Department who helped compile the data, said the numbers captured all overtime costs filed under a budget category for “COVID-19 activity.” While the figures could include some overtime worked by LAFD members at testing or vaccination sites, they largely represented hours worked by members who were filling in for others who had fallen ill with COVID-19 or were exposed to it and quarantining, Aguirre said.

She said she could not provide a more precise breakdown given limitations of the department’s financial tracking software.

The Fire Department said in a statement that it has had to increase overtime hours in light of demands associated with the coronavirus, and is keeping track of such expenses in order to seek federal reimbursement where possible.

The department said what effect the vaccine mandate will have on staffing is “still undetermined,” but if it “creates an unusually high number of vacancies,” the department would consider temporarily closing individual fire companies.

The department did not address the staffing gains it might experience from a vaccinated workforce, and directed other questions to Mayor Eric Garcetti’s office.

Harrison Wollman, a spokesman for Garcetti, said in a statement that the mandate “is in place to protect the health and safety of our workforce and the Angelenos they serve — so that we can continue to move

closer to the end of this pandemic, keep our employees on the job, and get our City back to full strength as quickly as possible.”

City officials have previously raised concerns about the Fire Department’s overtime spending amid the pandemic, with L.A. Controller Ron Galperin noting in an August report that the LAFD had spent \$14 million on overtime staffing at testing sites — of \$236 million in total overtime in 2020 — without “adequate timekeeping processes in place at testing sites or for pandemic response activities in general.”

The spending to backfill sick and quarantining personnel represents additional costs that have not previously been reported, providing new insight into the substantial toll that COVID-19 has had on the department — and the taxpayers who fund it.

The figures show overtime paid out to cover shifts in divisions across the department. Individual employees’ names were redacted from the data, but not their job classifications: firefighters, captains, fire apparatus operators and engineers.

The cost per hour of overtime varied depending on the classification of the employee working the shift. For some firefighters, it was less than \$33 an hour. For a captain, it was \$82 an hour. For a battalion chief, it was more than \$108 an hour.

The toll the virus has taken on the city’s public safety workforce — including fire and police department personnel — has been a major concern of city officials and department commanders, and part of the reason why a vaccination mandate was implemented.

City officials have said COVID-19 does not only threaten individual employees’ health and safety, [but the public at large](#) — including by depleting the workforces and resources of public safety agencies. They’ve said the vaccine mandate is meant to help address both threats.

However, that message hasn’t been included in recent discussions about public safety manpower.

Last week, United Firefighters of Los Angeles City Local 112 President Freddy Escobar held a news conference outside the union’s Westlake headquarters to warn about what he said would be a “devastating impact on public safety” if the city went ahead with plans to terminate firefighters who refuse to comply with the mandate rules.

Notices have been going out in recent days to unvaccinated city employees informing them that they must submit to and pay for coronavirus testing and be vaccinated by Dec. 18 as a condition of employment unless they receive a medical or religious exemption.

Escobar said the Fire Department is already facing staffing shortages, and that ambulances and firetrucks can’t operate without appropriate staffing levels.

“We have a staffing crisis now. And we simply can’t afford it to get worse,” Escobar said.

Escobar did not mention the staffing shortages posed by the virus itself or how they might continue at a more elevated rate if a large portion of the department remains unvaccinated.

Escobar did not respond to a request for comment on the overtime data.

On Monday, the union filed a lawsuit over the rollout of the mandate, arguing the city engaged in “bad faith bargaining” over the terms and saying that “it belies logic that the LAFD will be able to properly provide emergency, and oftentimes lifesaving, assistance to the community when it depletes an already depleted fire department” by terminating unvaccinated employees.

The union that represents police officers [has also filed a lawsuit](#) over the rollout of the mandate, and individual officers and firefighters have filed their own lawsuits, as well.

The Times requested similar overtime data from the Los Angeles Police Department, but it said it didn't have any such data because it hasn't been backfilling positions left vacant by officers out sick with COVID-19 or in quarantine.

"Because we don't backfill those positions, overtime is not paid so there is no overtime to track," said Capt. Stacy Spell, an LAPD spokesman.

The virus, however, has taken a heavy toll on Los Angeles Police Department staffing.

Thousands of officers have been sickened and sidelined by the virus. For much of the last two years, more than 100 LAPD employees have been out sick or quarantining at any given time.

Without those positions being filled, that meant hundreds of fewer police officers working in L.A. at a time when violent crime was spiking and homicides were hitting a decade high.

Caplan, of NYU, said he is "ethically outraged" by public safety officials who refuse to be vaccinated despite the fact that "the data keeps pouring in that there is nothing dangerous about vaccination" and despite the fact that even young children are beginning to get vaccinated as part of the broader societal effort to end the pandemic.

"Not doing what 7-year-olds are starting to do, which is to get vaccinated, strikes me as morally incomprehensible," he said.

When that resistance also costs taxpayers money, it's even more wrong, Caplan said.

"Not only are the firefighters literally being selfish, they are just incomprehensibly requiring the city to scramble to cover the cost of their obstinance," he said.

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HEADLINE	11/10 Distrust of China, Europe eyes Taiwan
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/10/world/asia/taiwan-europe-china.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=World%20News">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/10/world/asia/taiwan-europe-china.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=World%20News</a>
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan — European nations had long kept Taiwan at arm's length, wary of provoking Beijing, which opposes contact with the island it claims as its territory.</p> <p>But an unusual flurry of diplomatic activity suggests a subtle shift may be underway in Europe, driven in part by the region's growing frustration over China's aggressive posture.</p> <p>Two weeks ago, Taiwan's foreign minister, Joseph Wu, went on a charm offensive in Europe, stopping in Brussels for unprecedented, though informal, meetings with European Union lawmakers. The European Parliament overwhelmingly backed a resolution calling for stronger ties with Taiwan, which it described as a "partner and democratic ally in the Indo-Pacific."</p> <p>Then, last week, the Parliament sent its first-ever formal delegation to visit the island, defying Beijing's threats of retaliation.</p> <p>"We came here with a very simple, clear message: 'You are not alone,'" Raphaël Glucksmann, a French member of the European Parliament and the leader of the delegation, told Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen, in a meeting in Taipei last Thursday. "Europe is standing with you."</p> <p>The burst of diplomatic engagement with Taiwan would have been unlikely even a year ago. At that time, Europe and China were finally and speedily finishing a long-dormant deal to make it easier for companies to operate on each other's territory, scoring what was briefly seen as a geopolitical victory for Beijing.</p>

But China's increasingly assertive brand of authoritarianism under its leader, Xi Jinping, has fed distrust, and some distaste, too. European lawmakers blocked the investment agreement, citing China's human rights violations and sanctions. Now, concerns about the Chinese Communist Party's crackdown in Hong Kong, its handling of the coronavirus pandemic and its strategy of intimidating Taiwan with Chinese warplanes appear to have also prompted a growing willingness in Europe to re-evaluate — and strengthen — its ties with Taiwan.

“For the first time in history, in a very significant way, there has been a subtle but noticeable shift in European perceptions of Taiwan,” said Janka Oertel, director of the Asia Program at the European Council on Foreign Relations. “There has been a clear realization that the situation in Taiwan is of concern to Europeans not only from a values perspective but from the perspective of regional security architecture.”

To be sure, Europe's economic interests in China are huge, and the focus on Taiwan is still a minority effort. Europe has shown no intention of abandoning its longstanding policy of recognizing Beijing's position that there is only one Chinese government.

Europe is both reluctant and badly equipped to get involved militarily in the Indo-Pacific in the face of Washington's intense focus on deterring China from attacking Taiwan. The recent controversy over Australia's dumping a major submarine contract with France in favor of one with the United States (in which Britain played a supporting role) has angered many not just in Paris, but also in Brussels.

France, Mr. Glucksmann's home, has at least 1.5 million citizens in the Indo-Pacific and some 8,000 troops permanently based there. But no other European country has or intends to have a constant military presence in the region, as the United States does. Britain and Germany are more ambivalent about Taiwan: A German warship chose to avoid the Taiwan Strait after a warning from Beijing, while Britain did send one of its new carriers through the strait in September.

Still, to many in Taiwan and in Europe, too, the island would seem a natural partner for Europe, which prides itself as a “union of values.” Taiwan is a flourishing democracy with an independent legal system and strong protections for individual rights and the environment.

Taiwan has also worked to burnish its image globally with its response to the pandemic. Having the virus largely under control at home, Taiwan sent millions of masks to various countries, including in Europe, winning praise from officials around the region.

More recently, a continuing shortage of semiconductor chips has highlighted Taiwan's role as an indispensable node in the global supply chain for the chips, which power everything from iPhones to German cars.

“Democracy coupled with chips is a winning formula in Europe,” said Theresa Fallon, director of the Center for Russia Europe Asia Studies, a research institution in Brussels.

Taiwan has sought to play to its strengths. The European Parliament delegation spent much of its three-day trip to Taiwan meeting with policy research groups and nongovernment organizations to discuss how to fight disinformation. Mr. Glucksmann, who was among the Parliament members sanctioned by Beijing this year for his criticism of China's human rights record, said that Europe had been traditionally more focused on interference from Russia, rather than China.

“Not cooperating with Taiwan is a mistake, because where can you find better knowledge of the Chinese regime than here?” Mr. Glucksmann said in an interview in Taipei.

Taiwan has also sought to promote business ties with Europe. It sent a 66-member delegation of officials and business leaders to the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Lithuania to discuss investment and industrial cooperation.

While Taiwan's ultimate goal is to reach a bilateral investment agreement with Europe, it is also focused on institutionalizing ties to counter China's efforts at diplomatic isolation. In recent years, Beijing has continued to peel off Taiwan's formal diplomatic partners. Of Taiwan's 15 remaining allies, only one — the Vatican — is in Europe. But Taiwan scored a small win this year when Lithuania pressed ahead with plans to open a representative office early next year in Taipei, Taiwan's capital, despite outrage from Beijing.

"Taiwan is trying really hard to entice the European Union in order to diversify its own exports and decrease our dependence on China," said Cho Chung-hung, a professor and the director of the Institute of European Studies at Tamkang University in New Taipei City. "Taiwan is trying to take this opportunity to create more sustained and normalized relations with Europe."

Beijing has protested and vowed to take countermeasures against each act of outreach to Taiwan, including recalling its ambassador from Lithuania in August. But China may be wary of jeopardizing its access to the European market and further pushing the bloc toward the United States. Last month, Charles Michel, the president of the council representing the European bloc's 27 members, spoke with Mr. Xi, China's leader, for the first time since the investment agreement was derailed in May. After the call, Mr. Michel announced on his Twitter account that the two sides had agreed to hold a virtual summit soon.

Despite the call, relations between Beijing and the European Union are unlikely to quickly improve. Beijing is unwilling to back down on issues it sees as core interests, such as Taiwan and Xinjiang, which are a focus of the tensions, said Shi Yinhong, a professor of international relations at Renmin University in Beijing.

Of Europe's recent actions in support of Taiwan, Professor Shi said: "This is what China hates to see; this is not what makes the Chinese government happy."

"But there seems to be no way out of it all in the near future," he said.

It remains to be seen how much of the European support for Taiwan is merely rhetorical. Members of the European Parliament have more leeway than their counterparts in the European Council or Commission to make strong political gestures in favor of Taiwan. The new government in Germany and upcoming elections in France will be crucial to shaping the region's relationship with both Beijing and Taipei.

"The E.U. is going through this moment of self-reflection," said Zsuzsa Anna Ferenczy, a Taipei-based researcher and a former political adviser in the European Parliament. "'What kind of relationship do we want to have with China?' and 'What kind of relationship are we willing to have with Taiwan?'" These are the two big questions that still need to be addressed."

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HEADLINE	<b>11/10 Firefighters face 'broken' health system</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://longreads.trust.org/item/USA-%20firefighters-climate-frontlines-broken-health-system">https://longreads.trust.org/item/USA-%20firefighters-climate-frontlines-broken-health-system</a>
GIST	<p>Chris Carneal spent much of his working life fighting fires for the U.S. government, so when he was diagnosed with cancer he turned to a federal workplace compensation program for help to foot the bill.</p> <p>Although his doctors said his kidney cancer was linked to smoke exposure from work, the program administered by the Department of Labor (DOL) initially refused to cover his care.</p> <p>Carneal spent the last two years of his life struggling to pay medical bills and wrangling with a system that many firefighters say is failing to properly protect those who undertake one of the country's most dangerous and vital jobs.</p> <p>A year before his death, Carneal pleaded via Twitter with then-President Donald Trump to pressure Congress to make it easier for firefighters to access care for chronic illnesses.</p>

"Please help us," he wrote. "We give our life."

But it was only after Carneal's death in November 2020 that the DOL finally accepted his family's claim for work-related disease cover after concluding that his cancer was a result of his job fighting wildfires and other blazes.

For his wife, Dana, the hard-fought victory was "bittersweet".

"I was really disappointed they took so long and that he wasn't able to celebrate ... that win with us," she said.

"The whole time we were fighting for all this, he would always tell people 'I'm not looking for a ton of money ... I just want to pave the way for my brothers and sisters behind me if they should ever have to fight this fight'."

As climate change drives more frequent wildfires, firefighters for federal agencies like Carneal, a civilian who worked for the U.S. Army and fought scores of wildland fires, face a growing risk of work-related injury and illness.

But some find their claims for healthcare costs from the workplace compensation program get lost in a years-long bureaucratic process and sometimes are only paid or accepted after it is too late.

From 2017 to 2020, 2,500 work-related injuries or illnesses were reported on average each year by the roughly 10,000-strong U.S. Forest Service wildland firefighting force – the nation's biggest wildland force, a database provided to the Thomson Reuters Foundation showed.

"Our occupation is very risky, with high consequences ... We have to make sure we're taking care of people," said Kelly Martin, president of Grassroots Wildland Firefighters, a group lobbying for better workplace protections.

Too often, that is not the case, she said.

Federal firefighters are meant to have treatment for work-related health issues paid for by the government, but are often denied that care, more than a dozen current and former firefighters, their families, union officials and independent experts told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Case files, documents and medical records contain further criticism of the way in which the DOL - through its Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) - handles claims from firefighters.

"It's a broken system," Martin said. "We're talking about systematic failures."

One firefighter, who like others requested anonymity for fear of reprisals, said he struggled to get the government to pay for the multiple surgeries he needed after he was hurt in a fall at the scene of a remote wildfire.

"It would've been way easier if I died on that mountain," he said.

From smoke exposure and exhaustion to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the Forest Service database paints a stark picture of the toll wildland firefighting work is taking on the firefighters on the frontlines of climate change.

"I worked from 6 a.m. until midnight at 9,000 ft (2,743 meters) elevation in temperatures reaching the mid 90s," reads one entry by a firefighter who was digging trenches to protect nearby homes.

A survey conducted by Grassroots Wildland Firefighters found that two-thirds of wildland firefighters had sought help for an injury or illness from a workplace compensation scheme.



For years, members of the U.S. Congress have pushed for federal legislation to make it generally accepted that certain diseases are caused by firefighting work.

That would make it easier for firefighters like Carneal to access workplace compensation.

Many state and municipal firefighters already benefit from such "presumption laws", meaning they get more extensive cover than is usually provided by standard employee health insurance, firefighter advocacy groups said.

Amid a brutal 2021 wildfire season in the western United States, lawmakers in Washington, D.C., last month presented new legislation to boost federal firefighters' pay and benefits.

Crucially for federal wildland firefighters, the proposals include creating a presumption that illnesses including heart disease and some cancers can be "proximately caused" by the job.

"This is a no-brainer – why would we want to treat our federal firefighters (like) second-class firefighters?" said U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal, a California Democrat who has long pushed for a legislative fix.

The DOL said it accepts, roughly, at least 86% of the approximately 2,900 annual claims it has received from firefighters, on average, over the last 10 years, noting that anyone rejected has ample avenues to appeal.

In some cases, however, doctors are unable to establish a clear link between workplace exposure and a particular condition, said Christopher J. Godfrey, director of the DOL's OWCP.

He acknowledged dissatisfaction among some firefighters and said he understood why many want to see legislative changes that would make it easier for them to have claims approved.

But he said the workplace compensation program was not "adversarial" and aimed to help people get the benefits to which they are entitled.

"We're not an insurance company – we don't get a bonus for denying someone a claim ... (but) we can't accept a claim because we feel bad for the individual," Godfrey said by phone.

Many injured firefighters, however, said the existing system forces too many people to fight for the care they deserve.

In the Grassroots Wildland Firefighters survey, most reported a negative experience, and more than 40% said they did not get the care or benefits they needed.

#### **‘Damaged goods’**

Wildland firefighting is one of the most dangerous jobs in the United States, especially as global warming drives more frequent and intense forest blazes, experts said.

"A lot of things can just immediately kill you - a falling rock, or falling tree, you can be burned alive," said Kathleen Navarro, a researcher at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) who is studying wildland firefighting.

They also face invisible risks, such as exposure to toxins, she added.

But those injured, sometimes seriously, have their claims evaluated by the OWCP in a similar way to other federal workers with much more minor ailments - from mail carriers with sprained ankles to admin employees with carpal tunnel syndrome.



"We're the tip of the spear - fighting fires, fighting climate change - we're wildland heroes," said Bob Beckley, a union official representing federal employees, including some Forest Service workers.

"But when we're hurt, we're treated like we're disposable, damaged goods."

Although the OWCP has a dedicated office to handle paperwork from the Forest Service, firefighters who have been through the claims process said there is a lack of specialized training about the particular risks they face.

A DOL spokesperson rejected such criticism, saying the OWCP trains all its claims examiners on the links between workplace exposures and different medical conditions.

Godfrey noted, however, that the organization was working with NIOSH to establish a new claims handling unit that could deal with more difficult cases, like those involving certain cancers.

It might help in "getting someone to a doctor (in a) more timely (way) to get some of those difficult medical questions answered", he said, praising the work of current claims handlers.

But establishing a clear link between firefighting work and a particular condition is not the only challenge faced by sick or injured federal firefighters.

If they miss some element when they file paperwork, or neglect to file paperwork after a minor injury that becomes more serious over time, firefighters can struggle for years to convince authorities to pay for their full care, said Beckley.

Administrative hiccups are also a common problem, he said.

One firefighting supervisor told Grassroots the OWCP had denied coverage to a firefighter who was bitten by a highly venomous spider while urinating near a fire scene, on the grounds that she had neglected to wear protective pants.

"I guess she was supposed to pee in her pants," the supervisor wrote, adding that the firefighter had to spend \$4,000 of her own money on medical care.

A Forest Service spokesperson said compensation and claims specialists are dispatched to major fire scenes to help firefighters file any injury claims, but that they are ultimately decided by the DOL.

The spokesperson declined to comment on individual cases, but said the "physical, psychological, and social safety of employees is a core value (of the agency)".

### **'Begging for help'**

Several firefighters' families said they had only managed to get healthcare costs paid after appealing to elected officials.

"I am begging for help," Michelle Ochoa wrote in a letter to Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat in March 2016.

It had been over two years since her husband Richard "Wally" Ochoa, a 21-year Forest Service veteran, was hit by a falling tree while defending a small Idaho community from a wildfire.

His face and shoulder were ripped open, both legs were broken and he suffered lasting brain trauma.

After Ochoa was released from hospital, the family's doctors recommended a full course of treatment at a brain injury rehabilitation center, but the OWCP refused to pay, without giving a reason, Ochoa said.

It was only after Wyden's office intervened that a partial course of rehabilitation was cleared, Ochoa said.

When it comes to injured wildland firefighters, "the very least we can do" is make sure there's quick access to workers' compensation, Wyden said.

"Change needs to happen across the board, from increased pay and better hours to better health benefits," Wyden said in emailed comments. "This is basic decency every worker in America deserves, including our firefighters."

Another firefighter who broke nearly a dozen bones during a fall in a mountainous fire zone said he had a surgery denied while he was on the way to hospital – a decision that was overturned following the intervention of his local senator.

"It's criminal that people have to go to their senators to beg for help," Martin said. "It should've been a warning sign that things are broken."

Godfrey, of the OWCP, said some claims are initially rejected before being approved later when more information is submitted.

"A lot of times that initial denial will happen, but someone will come back within the next month or two with a better, rationalized medical report on causation," he said.

Since Ochoa's injury, his wife Michelle and son Alex said efforts to get his care paid for have turned into a full-time job, demanding hundreds of hours of their time.

The family has had to delay shoulder surgery, pay for ear procedures out of pocket, and rely on the native tribe they belong to for help paying for medication. Ochoa said the family's ordeal had led him to contemplate suicide.

"You are like trash - they put you out on the curb, like you aren't worth anything," Michelle said. "You can't fight fires anymore? You're useless to us."

### **Profound risk**

Researchers with the U.S. government have long shown links between some cancers and careers fighting wildland fires, where firefighters often spend weeks in smoke-clogged areas.

Fires in buildings or in forests can expose people to carbon monoxide, ammonia, sulphur dioxide, formaldehyde, and asbestos, among other toxins.

Forest Service firefighters have sought medical treatment costs for approximately 800 incidents or illnesses related to smoke exposure since 2017, the database shows, though experts said the true number was likely much higher.

"The risk is just profound," said George Broyles, a researcher who studies the health risks of wildland firefighting.

He co-authored a 2019 study that found a 10-year career led to a 22-24% increase in mortality from certain kinds of lung cancers and heart disease.

But despite such findings, federal wildland firefighters still have to prove such conditions are directly linked to their work.

Policy has not caught up to science, Broyles said.

Carneal, a former fire captain with Fort Carson Fire and Emergency Services in Colorado, and his doctors consistently maintained his cancer diagnosis at a relatively young age - early-to-mid 40s - was linked to the toxins he was exposed to as a federal firefighter.

His career working for the U.S. Army involved fighting more than 65 wildland fires, among other blazes.

The family was finally vindicated in July when the federal government accepted his claim on the basis of additional medical evidence and testimonials from Carneal's doctors.

Besides the emotional strain, Carneal's health problems took a heavy financial toll on the family. Facing hefty insurance co-payments for medical tests, the Carneals refinanced their home.

Asked about individual cases like Carneal's, the OWCP said privacy laws prevented it from discussing them without authorization.

### **'Travesty and dishonor'**

Carbajal, one of a number of congressmen pushing to extend the "presumption law" benefits granted to state and municipal firefighters to their federal counterparts, called the disparate treatment a "travesty" and a "dishonor".

State, municipal and federal firefighters often work together at wildfire scenes, he noted.

A 2009 version of the legislation was projected to cost roughly \$26 million over a 10-year period, according to Congress's budget scorekeeper - a tiny sum in the federal budget.

With wildfires raging from California to Texas and Washington this summer, pay for federal firefighters has also caught policymakers' attention.

President Joe Biden took steps over the summer to boost some firefighters' pay at least temporarily, calling the roughly \$13-an-hour starting salary for some "ridiculously low".

Last month, U.S. Rep. Joe Neguse, a Colorado Democrat, introduced a bill to raise the annual wage for federal firefighters to at least \$57,000. It also seeks to address complaints about the federal workplace compensation program.

"Getting treatment for work-related illnesses and injuries shouldn't be harder than fighting the actual forest fire," Rep. Katie Porter of California, a co-sponsor, told a congressional hearing.

Skeptical about finding support through official channels, some firefighters turn to charity organizations in an emergency.

"My phone rings 24/7 - I'll get calls when they're giving mouth-to-mouth on the forest floor," said Burk Minor, president of the Wildland Firefighter Foundation, which raises funds for firefighters in need.

In July 2018, Daniel Lyon wrote a note on his GoFundMe page - an online fundraising platform - updating the nearly 100 people who had donated

"About a month and a half ago, I received my 28th series of operations," he said. "I want to thank you all and appreciate each and every one of you."

It had been three years since the fire engine Lyon was riding in was engulfed in flames as he and his crew battled to protect remote houses threatened by a blaze in Washington state.

Lyon's three crewmates burned to death, and he staggered out of his fire engine, his entire body on fire.

Although his major surgeries were covered by OWCP payments, he struggled to get auxiliary services paid for, including massage to deal with the pain caused by burns over 65% of his body, and mental health counseling for PTSD.

"The bills just started piling up. Dealing with workers' compensation became my full-time job. I felt like I worked for them," he said.

"I don't think these higher-ups realize how screwed we are when we are injured on the job."

Like many injured firefighters, he turned to GoFundMe and private donors to make ends meet. The Wildland Firefighter Foundation helped him pay for the counseling he needed.

"We have to resort to nonprofits in our times of need - but those nonprofits are funded by donations from other firefighters," said Brandon Dunham, a former wildland firefighter who now hosts a podcast about the work.

Minor estimates his foundation alone allocates between \$500,000 and \$750,000 to the families of firefighters facing injuries and other hardships.

That is roughly 10% of what the Forest Service spent on medical care last year, according to numbers provided to the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"People are afraid to speak up about this because they think they'll lose their jobs," Lyon said, a view echoed by half a dozen current and former firefighters.

Former wildland firefighter Sara Brown has been wrangling with the OWCP for nearly 15 years since breaking both legs parachuting into a remote location in New Mexico to protect a cabin from a blaze in 2007.

"The OWCP process is incredibly adversarial," she said. "I had over 20-plus surgeries and procedures, many of which required multiple claims to be submitted. Many of those claims were denied, some repeatedly," she said.

Brown, who eventually had to have both legs amputated, said "not having treatments on the timeline that my doctors suggested would be most beneficial makes me wonder if long-term damage was done by waiting through the OWCP process".

The DOL spokesperson said the department had not heard complaints of "systemic failures" tied to the OWCP during recent outreach with groups representing federal firefighters.

The outreach has given officials an opportunity to hear about "the challenges associated with obtaining necessary medical opinions from physicians", the spokesperson added.

Brown, like many other firefighters, did not blame one individual or agency, pointing instead to factors including bureaucratic shortcomings and a lack of urgency to address the problem.

"There are no villains here," said Minor. "There are good-hearted people in these agencies."

But he said the situation was "only getting worse as the fire seasons get longer and longer".

"(Firefighters) are only humans, they're not machines," he added. "Something's got to give."

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HEADLINE	11/09 Thanksgiving travel expected rebound
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/thanksgiving-travel-expected-rebound-near-pre-pandemic-levels/PJ67RNRC5NENRIQ6FAOUQTPT34/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/thanksgiving-travel-expected-rebound-near-pre-pandemic-levels/PJ67RNRC5NENRIQ6FAOUQTPT34/</a>
GIST	Prepare for roads and airports to be noticeably more crowded this Thanksgiving.

	<p>According to <a href="#">a new report from AAA</a>, 53.4 million people are expected to travel for the holiday this year, 6.4 million more than last year.</p> <p>That marks the highest single-year increase in travelers for Thanksgiving since 2005, bringing travel volumes within 5% of pre-pandemic levels in 2019.</p> <p>“This Thanksgiving, travel will look a lot different than last year,” said Ragina C. Ali, Public and Government Affairs Manager at AAA Mid-Atlantic. “Now that the borders are open and new health and safety guidelines are in place, travel is once again high on the list for Americans who are ready to reunite with their loved ones for the holiday.”</p> <p>While 90% of people plan to travel by car, air travel volume is expected to increase dramatically, up 80% over 2020.</p> <p>Drivers are expected to experience the worst congestion headed into the holiday weekend, with major metro areas expected to see the most delays. Drivers in Seattle are expected to see more than double the delays versus typical drive times.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Tacoma: 4 finalists for PD chief position</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/tacoma-unveils-list-of-4-finalists-vying-for-police-chief-post">https://komonews.com/news/local/tacoma-unveils-list-of-4-finalists-vying-for-police-chief-post</a>
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — Tacoma city officials on Tuesday released the identities of four law enforcement officers who are in the running to be the city's next police chief of a department that has been grappling in recent weeks with a spate of deadly violence, including a <a href="#">quadruple murder</a> in the Salishan neighborhood that rocked the city last month.</p> <p>According to a written statement released by the city, the period for accepting applications from candidates ended Oct. 15, and their credentials were reviewed by Bob Murray and Associates, an outside executive recruitment firm hired to manage the process.</p> <p>The Tacoma Police Department is currently being led by interim police Chief Michael Ake, who was named to the position following the retirement of former chief Don Ramsdell in January 2021.</p> <p>The four candidates have been identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael D. Carroll, who retired from the Alameda County Sheriff's Office in the Oakland, California area in April. According to the bio released by the city, his duties included oversight of the Emergency Services Communication Center along with other departments in the office.</li> <li>• Sean Case, currently a captain with the Anchorage, Alaska police department. Tacoma officials said his current duties include responsibility for Internal Affairs, Patrol, Administrative and Inspection divisions in Anchorage. He also currently works as a police practices consultant for Daigle Law Group.</li> <li>• Kathy A. McAlpine. the current police chief for the Tigard Police Department in Oregon. McAlpine's professional policing career began as a patrol officer with the Tacoma Police Department. While in Tacoma, McAlpine served in many leadership positions, including: assistant chief of police for the Administrative and Investigations Bureaus; patrol captain and lieutenant for Planning and Research and Community Poling Sector commander.</li> <li>• Avery L. Moore. Current working as an assistant chief of police for the Dallas Police Department's Investigations Bureau. According to the city, he started his career at DPD as a patrol officer and has held many leadership positions at the agency since.</li> </ul> <p>The city's residents and business community will be able to meet the four chief finalists during the week of Nov. 15 through public presentations and a panel discussion.</p> <p>Tacoma has created an <a href="#">online page</a> that has information about each candidate.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Weather creates havoc in western Wash.</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/weather-creates-havoc-throughout-western-washington-with-downed-trees-power-lines">https://komonews.com/news/local/weather-creates-havoc-throughout-western-washington-with-downed-trees-power-lines</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The storms are bringing trees and lines down throughout the area, causing power outages and traffic mishaps early Tuesday morning.</p> <p>Pouring rain has soaked all of Western Washington overnight and early in the morning.</p> <p>The weather caused about 64,000 power outages across the state, with the biggest problem areas in King and Snohomish counties.</p> <p>King County had about 6,800 homes and businesses in the dark, with Snohomish County having about 3,500 without power.</p> <p>Meanwhile, workers were clearing trees off streets early in the morning, with multiple roads blocked off as they try to make it safe.</p> <p>In Renton, strong wind gusts brought trees down around Bremerton Ave. NE near an apartment building. Firefighters had to cut it all away to open the roads and get to the building.</p> <p>In Kent, a tree hit a home on 202nd Street Place, the tree went through a bedroom and bathroom on the second floor, but we're told no one inside the home was hurt.</p> <p>A downed tree is giving officials a reason to shut down an entire street for about half of the day.</p> <p>The Seattle Department of Transportation said all north and southbound lanes on Lake City Way NE from NE 95th street to NE 98th Street will be shut down.</p> <p>This comes after a downed tree blocked the street, SDOT said it expects this to take half the day to clear up. Anyone who needs to go this way is urged to find another route.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/10 Iran-supplied arms: Yemen to Somalia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/iranian-supplied-arms-smuggled-yemen-into-somalia-study-says-2021-11-10/">https://www.reuters.com/world/iranian-supplied-arms-smuggled-yemen-into-somalia-study-says-2021-11-10/</a>
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Nov 10 (Reuters) - Guns supplied by Iran to its Houthi allies in Yemen are being smuggled across the Gulf of Aden to Somalia, according to a Geneva-based think tank, where al Qaeda-linked al Shabab insurgents are battling a weak and divided government.</p> <p>The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime said its study drew on data from more than 400 weapons documented in 13 locations across Somalia over eight months and inventories from 13 dhows intercepted by naval vessels.</p> <p>It is the first publicly available research into the scale of illicit arms smuggling from Yemen into the Horn of Africa country.</p> <p>"Weapons originating in the Iran–Yemen arms trade are being trafficked onward into Somalia itself," said the study, which is due to be published on Wednesday.</p> <p>"Iran has repeatedly denied any involvement in the trafficking of arms to the Houthis. However, a preponderance of evidence points to Iranian state supply."</p> <p>Iran's foreign ministry and a spokesman for Yemen's Houthi forces did not respond to a request for comment on the study. Iran has repeatedly denied any involvement in the trafficking of arms to its Houthi allies in Yemen, where the six-year-old civil war has killed tens of thousands.</p>

	<p>The Somali government spokesman and the internal security minister did not return calls or messages seeking comment.</p> <p>The study said the investigators were not able to fully document the buyers and sellers of the weapons.</p> <p>But it said signs the weapons were originally supplied by the Iranian state included serial numbers that were very close together, indicating they were part of the same shipment, information from satellite navigation systems on seized dhows and human intelligence from trafficking gangs.</p> <p>One dhow carrying weapons which was seized by a U.S. navy vessel had a GPS with stored points in Iran, southern Yemen and Somalia, the report said, including a small anchorage near Jask port, which hosts an Iranian naval base, and "home" as the Yemeni port of Mukalla, a well-known arms smuggling hub.</p> <p>The study said the guns end up with commercial smuggling networks whose customers can include armed factions seeking advantage ahead of Somalia's repeatedly delayed presidential elections, as well as clan militias and rival Islamist insurgent groups linked to al Qaeda and Islamic State.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/10 Russia bombers over Belarus; blames EU</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-blames-eu-looming-catastrophe-over-migrants-belarus-poland-border-2021-11-10/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-blames-eu-looming-catastrophe-over-migrants-belarus-poland-border-2021-11-10/</a>
GIST	<p>MOSCOW, Nov 10 (Reuters) - Russia blamed the European Union on Wednesday for the migrant crisis on the border between Belarus and Poland, accusing it of trying to "strangle" Belarus with plans to close part of the frontier and urging it to talk directly with Minsk.</p> <p>As migrants from the Middle East, Afghanistan and Africa made new attempts to break into Poland overnight, Moscow sent a further signal of support for its ally Belarus by dispatching two strategic bomber planes to patrol Belarusian airspace.</p> <p>The Tu-22M3 bombers helped test Belarus's joint air defence system, RIA news agency quoted the defence ministry as saying in a statement that did not refer to the migrant crisis but served to underline the rise in tensions on NATO's eastern frontier.</p> <p>Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a joint news conference with his Belarusian counterpart Vladimir Makei that he hoped responsible Europeans would "not allow themselves to be drawn into a spiral that is fairly dangerous".</p> <p>Makei said Russia and Belarus were mutually supporting each other "including in terms of a joint response to unfriendly activity against our countries".</p> <p>President Vladimir Putin told German Chancellor Angela Merkel in a phone call that the EU should discuss the crisis directly with Minsk, the Kremlin said.</p> <p>"It is apparent that a humanitarian catastrophe is looming against the background of Europeans' reluctance to demonstrate commitment to their European values," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a briefing.</p> <p>He described as "absolutely irresponsible and unacceptable" a comment by Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki on Tuesday that the crisis "has its mastermind in Moscow".</p> <p>Russian financial and other backing helped Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko survive mass protests against his rule last year after a disputed election.</p>



	<p>Moscow has doubled down on its support for Belarus and criticised the EU over the migrant crisis, which Brussels says has been manufactured by Belarus in retaliation for EU sanctions over the election and other human rights issues.</p> <p>Peskov said the EU had in the past let in similar groups of migrants and its moves to close the border now were aimed against Minsk.</p> <p>"This is nothing other than further attempts to actually strangle Belarus," he said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/10 WHO: cases declining except in Europe</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-united-nations-world-health-organization-europe-pandemics-c46daeb01619a1b824cb0fa7c31e7a0e">https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-united-nations-world-health-organization-europe-pandemics-c46daeb01619a1b824cb0fa7c31e7a0e</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>LONDON (AP) — The World Health Organization reported Wednesday that coronavirus deaths rose by 10% in Europe in the past week, making it the only world region where both COVID-19 cases and deaths are steadily increasing. It was the sixth consecutive week that the virus has risen across the continent.</p> <p>In its weekly report on the pandemic, the U.N. health agency said there were about 3.1 million new cases globally, about a 1% increase from the previous week. Nearly two-thirds of the coronavirus infections - 1.9 million - were in Europe, where cases rose by 7%.</p> <p>The countries with the highest numbers of new cases worldwide were the United States, Russia, Britain, Turkey and Germany. The number of weekly COVID-19 deaths fell by about 4% worldwide and declined in every region except Europe.</p> <p>Out of the 61 countries WHO includes in its European region, which includes Russia and stretches to Central Asia, 42% reported a jump in cases of at least 10% in the last week.</p> <p>In the Americas, WHO said that new weekly cases fell by 5% and deaths declined by 14%, with the highest numbers reported from the United States.</p> <p>On Tuesday, pharmaceutical company Pfizer asked the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to authorize booster shots of coronavirus vaccines for all adults. WHO has pleaded with countries not to administer more boosters until at least the end of the year; about 60 countries are actively rolling them out.</p> <p>In Southeast Asia and Africa, COVID-19 deaths declined by about a third, despite the lack of vaccines in those regions.</p> <p>WHO's Europe director, Dr. Hans Kluge, said last week that Europe was once again "back at the epicenter of the pandemic." He warned that if more actions weren't taken to stop COVID-19, the region could see another 500,000 deaths by February.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/09 Reopened but still closed to many in world</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-lifestyle-business-europe-travel-535cf4cd5fa6f0c117e0b20c1d8da6ff">https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-lifestyle-business-europe-travel-535cf4cd5fa6f0c117e0b20c1d8da6ff</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. says that it's inviting the global community to visit now that the government has <a href="#">ended the ban</a> on travelers from 33 countries.</p> <p>In reality, however, it will still be difficult — if not impossible — for much of the globe to enter the country and experts say it will take years for travel to fully recover.</p>

For starters, half the world [isn't vaccinated](#) and therefore doesn't meet the U.S. requirement for visiting foreigners. So while many Europeans may now be able to come in, people from poorer countries [where vaccines are scarce](#) remain cut off, with [limited exceptions](#).

For some public health experts, that raises ethical questions about the policy.

"The concern is not limiting access based on vaccination status," said Nancy Kass, deputy director of public health in the Berman Institute of Bioethics at Johns Hopkins University. "It is that it's systemically making it impossible for people, generally from poor countries, whose governments have been unable to secure anything near the supply they need, to be able to come and see their loved ones."

Even if you've gotten the jab, that might not be good enough. Non-immigrant adults need to have received vaccines authorized by the Food and Drug Administration or which received an emergency use listing from the World Health Organization, otherwise they, too, are [prohibited](#) from entering the U.S. That sidelines anyone who's received Russia's Sputnik V or the China-produced CanSino jab.

Then there are the months-long delays in some places to get a visa. The U.S. Travel Association says that, on average, there's a six-month visitor visa appointment backlog as many U.S. consulates and embassies have yet to resume normal operations. Meanwhile, other countries have their own strict rules, which complicates foreign travel.

Experts do expect a wave of travelers at U.S. airports, which will go a long way to boost the overall industry. The 28 European countries that up until Monday were barred under the U.S. policy made up 37% of overseas visitors in 2019, the U.S. Travel Association says.

Travelport, which analyzes airline bookings data, says that by region, the greatest number of international travelers to the U.S. since mid-2020 has come from Latin America, but new travelers booking flights since late September, when the Biden administration said it would end the travel bans, are mainly European. The [reopening of the land borders](#) with [Canada](#) and Mexico should also help restore travel, since they are typically the top two sources of international visitors to the U.S.

But the U.S. Travel Association predicted in June that international travel would not return to 2019 levels of nearly 80 million visitors until 2024. Foreign travelers dropped to 19 million in 2020 and is expected to rise a bit this year, to more than 26 million; it will more than double, to about 57 million, in 2022 but still fall far short of its pre-pandemic heights.

The U.S. isn't alone in trying to jump-start travel as more people get vaccinated. Some countries that closed their borders have begun easing back, like Australia, India and [Thailand](#); Europe opened its doors to Americans months ago.

Others, like China and Japan, remain essentially closed, which makes it difficult for their own citizens to leave and come back because of mandatory quarantines. In 2019, the two countries were among the top five biggest sources of overseas visitors to the U.S., along with the U.K., South Korea and Brazil, according to U.S. government data.

Sylvia Li, who is from China and lives in the U.S., just married her partner in a small ceremony in New York a few weeks ago without her family there because she had no idea when they'd be able to come or when she'd be able to go to China.

"I was able to convince them, it's really nothing, it's just a party," Li said. But her mom didn't fall for it. "I think my mom felt she was missing out. She felt like she was actually missing something big."

Edgar Orozco, who owns two restaurants, both called Chelito's, in El Paso, Texas, was excited for the land border with Mexico to reopen on Monday, and he hopes that helps fill the streets of downtown El Paso with shoppers — and customers at his restaurants — this holiday season, unlike last year, when he said streets were empty.

“Now that non-essential travelers are going to be able to come back, we’re looking forward to going back to those good old days,” he said.

But he’s heard of people who have visa issues, like a vendor in Mexico who he says can’t renew his visa until 2023. The [appointment wait time](#) for a U.S. visitor visa in Ciudad Juarez, just across the border from El Paso, is 676 days, or nearly two years, according to the State Department.

In New York, the country’s biggest tourist destination, businesses are gearing up for more international travelers. Hudson Yards, a shopping complex, is expanding its concierge services to include a wider array of foreign languages. City Experiences, a tour company that sends ferries to the Statue of Liberty and other sites, is increasing marketing abroad.

In the past two weeks, 75% of new bookings at three Moxy hotels in Manhattan have come from Europe, mostly the United Kingdom, Spain, France and Germany, said Mitchell Hochberg, president of the hotels’ operator, Lightstone.

Still, Hochberg thinks it will take until at least spring for international bookings to be back to their pre-pandemic levels.

“Travel can be cumbersome,” he said. “The flights are somewhat limited right now.”

Worry about getting COVID-19 also continues to put a damper on travel plans for many, even if they’re now allowed in.

Mehek Khera doesn’t want her parents in India to visit her in Santa Clara, California, even though they could now — they’re vaccinated and have visas. But the risk of getting sick is too high. Her father has a heart condition, and they don’t have health insurance in the U.S.

“We don’t feel comfortable adding on another risk on top of that,” Khera said. “They don’t feel very excited to travel.”

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Poland: Putin mastermind in migrant crisis</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59226226">https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59226226</a>
GIST	<p>Poland's Prime Minister has accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of being behind a migrant crisis at Belarus's border with Poland.</p> <p>Mateusz Morawiecki said that Belarus's authoritarian leader, a close ally of Mr Putin, is orchestrating the crisis, but "it has its mastermind in Moscow".</p> <p>At least 2,000 migrants are stuck at the border in freezing conditions.</p> <p>Belarus's leader Alexander Lukashenko denies claims it is sending people over the border in revenge for EU sanctions.</p> <p>Video footage shows crowds of people on the Belarusian side of a barbed-wire border fence with Poland. Some try to force their way through using bolt cutters, tree trunks and group force, while Polish guards fend them off with what appears to be tear gas.</p> <p>Many of the migrants are young men but there are also women and children, mostly from the Middle East and Asia. They are camping in tents just inside Belarus, trapped between Polish guards on one side, and Belarusian guards on the other.</p>

Speaking on Tuesday at an emergency parliamentary session after visiting troops on the border, Mr Morawiecki said: "This attack which Lukashenko is conducting has its mastermind in Moscow, the mastermind is President Putin."

He accused the Russian and Belarusian leaders of trying to destabilise the European Union - which the two countries are not part of - by allowing migrants to travel through Belarus and enter the bloc.

Mr Morawiecki described the situation as "a new type of war in which people are used as human shields", and said Poland was dealing with a "stage play" which is designed to create chaos in the EU.

He added that it was the first time in 30 years that Poland's border security had been so "brutally attacked".

Poland has deployed extra troops to the border, and warned of a possible "armed" escalation, fearing that Belarus might try to provoke an incident.

Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, which are all part of the EU, have seen a surge in the number of people trying to enter their countries illegally from Belarus in recent months. On Tuesday, Lithuania declared a state of emergency on its border with Belarus, which will come into effect at midnight.

Poland has seen the most arrivals, especially around its major border crossing at Kuznica.

Poland has been accused of pushing migrants back across the border into Belarus, contrary to international rules of asylum. Journalists and aid agencies have been banned from accessing the area.

"Nobody is letting us get in anywhere, Belarus or Poland," 33-year-old Shwan Kurd from Iraq told the BBC by video-call.

He described how he had arrived in Belarus's capital, Minsk, from Baghdad at the start of November, and was now in a make-shift camp metres from Poland's barbed-wire fence.

"There's no way to escape," he said. "Poland won't let us in. Every night they fly helicopters. They don't let us sleep. We are so hungry. There's no water or food here. There are little children, old men and women, and families."

The EU, Nato and the US all accuse Belarus of coordinating the surge of migrants. The European Commission has accused Mr Lukashenko of luring migrants with the false promise of easy entry to the EU as part of an "inhuman, gangster-style approach".

Brussels says his actions are a retaliation against EU sanctions, which were imposed after his [widely discredited re-election and subsequent crackdown on mass protests](#).

Activists say the migrants are being used as pawns in a political game between Belarus and its EU neighbours.

Lithuania

Lithuania has also moved troops to its border with Belarus to prepare for a possible influx of migrants. Its government said declaring a state of emergency was a precautionary response.

About two dozen migrants who were detained in Lithuania after illegally crossing over from Belarus were suspected of having links to terrorist organisations, Lithuania's vice interior minister Kestutis Lanciskas told the BBC.

Most of them presented fake IDs when they were stopped and background checks are still ongoing, Mr Lanciskas said. He could not comment on which terrorist organisations may have links with the migrants, nor when they were detained.

	<p>"There is always a certain level of risk when there's a large number of people crossing the border," Mr Lancinskaskas said.</p> <p>"All member states have a level of terrorism threat. Our intelligence services are doing their best to prevent those kinds of activities."</p> <p>What does Belarus say?</p> <p>In an interview with the Belarusian state news agency, Mr Lukashenko said he wanted to avoid any military escalation on the border which could draw Russia into a conflict.</p> <p>He said he was "not a madman" and knew what was at stake, but remained defiant, saying "we will not kneel down".</p> <p>The Belarus defence ministry has accused Warsaw of violating agreements by moving thousands of troops to the border.</p> <p>Belarus insists migrants are arriving there legally and that it is merely acting "as a hospitable country". Russia has praised its ally's "responsible" handling of the border row and said it is watching the situation closely.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 France: under-30 should not get Moderna</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/covid-19-people-under-30-should-not-get-moderna-vaccine-france-684457">https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/covid-19-people-under-30-should-not-get-moderna-vaccine-france-684457</a>
GIST	<p>France's public health authority has recommended people under 30 be given Pfizer's Comirnaty <a href="#">COVID-19 vaccine</a> when available instead of Moderna's Spikevax jab, which carried comparatively higher risks of heart-related problems.</p> <p>The Haute Autorite de Sante (HAS), which does not have legal power to ban or license drugs but acts as an advisor to the French health sector, cited "very rare" risks linked to <a href="#">Myocarditis</a>, a heart disease, that had shown up in recent data on the Moderna vaccine and in a French study published on Monday.</p> <p>"Within the population aged under 30, this risk appears to be around five times lesser with Pfizer's Comirnaty jab compared to Moderna's Spikevax jab," HAS said in its opinion published on Monday.</p> <p>The decision in Paris came after regulators in several other countries, including Canada, Finland and Sweden, had also taken a more defensive stance on Spikevax over heart-related safety concerns affecting younger people.</p> <p>The European Union's drug regulator EMA last month approved Moderna's booster vaccine for all age groups over 18, at least six months after the second dose.</p> <p>The EMA earlier this year said that it had found a possible link between the very rare inflammatory heart condition and COVID-19 vaccines from both Pfizer's and Moderna's vaccines.</p> <p>However, according to the EMA, the benefits of both mRNA shots in preventing COVID-19 continue to outweigh the risks, the regulator said, echoing similar views expressed by US regulators and the World Health Organization.</p> <p>France's HAS said that its recommendation, which would apply regardless of the vaccine's use as a first, second or third "booster" dose, would be valid until more scientific findings on the matter are known.</p> <p>For persons aged over 30, however, the authority explicitly recommended the use of the Moderna vaccine, saying its effectiveness was slightly superior.</p>

	<p>Moderna Inc on Tuesday applied for European authorization of its COVID-19 vaccine in children aged 6-11 years, weeks after it delayed a similar filing with US regulators.</p> <p>The European Union had in July authorized the vaccine for use in teens aged 12 to 17 years, but several countries including Sweden paused its use for people aged 30 and younger due to rare heart-related side-effects.</p> <p>Moderna said in late October the US drugs regulator needed more time to complete its review for use in the 12-17 age group as it studies the risk of a type of heart inflammation called myocarditis after vaccination.</p> <p>The drugmaker delayed the US application for children aged 6 to 11, while the FDA completes its review for the vaccine's use in the 12-17 age group.</p> <p>Earlier in October, the company said its vaccine generated a strong immune response in children aged six to 11 years and that it plans to submit the data to global regulators soon.</p> <p>Moderna said on Tuesday it had applied to the European Medicines Agency for use of a 50 micrograms dose of the vaccine in children, half the strength used in the adult vaccinations.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/09 Schools ditch old way of grading</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://news.yahoo.com/faced-soaring-ds-fs-schools-130030318.html">https://news.yahoo.com/faced-soaring-ds-fs-schools-130030318.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>A few years ago, high school teacher Joshua Moreno got fed up with his grading system, which had become a points game.</p> <p>Some students accumulated so many points early on that by the end of the term they knew they didn't need to do more work and could still get an A. Others — often those who had to work or care for family members after school — would fail to turn in their homework and fall so far behind that they would just stop trying.</p> <p>“It was literally inequitable,” he said. “As a teacher you get frustrated because what you signed up for was for students to learn. And it just ended up being a conversation about points all the time.”</p> <p>These days, the Alhambra High School English teacher has done away with points entirely. He no longer gives students homework and gives them multiple opportunities to improve essays and classwork. The goal is to base grades on what students are learning, and remove behavior, deadlines and how much work they do from the equation.</p> <p>The changes Moreno embraced are part of a growing trend in which educators are moving away from traditional point-driven grading systems, aiming to close large academic gaps among racial, ethnic and economic groups. The trend was accelerated by the pandemic and school closures that caused troubling increases in Ds and Fs across the country and by calls to examine the role of institutionalized racism in schools in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd by a police officer.</p> <p>Los Angeles and San Diego Unified — the state's two largest school districts, with some 660,000 students combined — have recently directed teachers to base academic grades on whether students have learned what was expected of them during a course — and not penalize them for behavior, work habits and missed deadlines. The policies encourage teachers to give students opportunities to revise essays or retake tests to show that they have met learning goals, rather than enforcing hard deadlines.</p> <p>"It's teaching students that failure is a part of learning. We fall. We get back up. We learn from the feedback that we get," said Alison Yoshimoto-Towery, L.A. Unified's chief academic officer.</p>

Traditional grading has often been used to "justify and to provide unequal educational opportunities based on a student's race or class," said a letter sent by Yoshimoto-Towery and Pedro A. Garcia, senior executive director of the division of instruction, to principals last month.

"By continuing to use century-old grading practices, we inadvertently perpetuate achievement and opportunity gaps, rewarding our most privileged students and punishing those who are not," their letter said, quoting educational grading consultant Joe Feldman.

The urgent need for change became painfully apparent during pandemic-forced school closures as educators grappled with how to fairly grade students living through an unprecedented disruption to their education. Some of the challenges that students faced were unique to the pandemic. Others had long been present and were more visible.

Suddenly, teachers had an inside view of the crowded home conditions of some low-income students. They saw how some teenagers were caring for younger siblings while trying to do their own work and witnessed the impact of the digital divide as students with spotty internet access struggled to log on to class.

"The COVID pandemic just highlighted across the nation a trend of looking at the inequities in learning circumstances for students," said Carol Alexander, director of A-G intervention and support for L.A. Unified. "But those different circumstances of learning have always been present."

Feldman, a former teacher and administrator who wrote the book "Grading for Equity," had been working for several years with school districts across the country as they reconsidered grading policies. In October and November of the 2020-21 academic school year, he suddenly found himself fielding a "tidal wave" of calls from districts, as teachers issued progress reports and realized that Ds and Fs were skyrocketing.

"Our traditional grading practices have always harmed our traditionally underserved students," Feldman said. "But now because the number of students being harmed was so much greater, it got people more aware of it and ready to tackle this issue."

Several school districts across California, reflecting a diversity of demographics, are taking steps toward revising grading with an eye toward equity. Some have formally adopted new policies while others are offering training and support for teachers who want to grade differently.

Last year, West Contra Costa Unified, which is majority Latino, issued a memo encouraging secondary teachers to give students a five-day grace period to turn in work and eliminate zeroes in grade books.

Placer Union High School District, where a majority of students are white, has directed teachers to base grades on "valid evidence of a student's content knowledge and not...on evidence that is likely to be influenced by a teacher's implicit bias nor reflect a student's circumstances."

In Los Angeles, the district had begun to train teachers on practices including basing grades on whether students are meeting academic standards. But when faced with a flood of Ds and Fs during school closures, officials quickly moved to change policy, giving students additional time to make up work.

A recent L.A. Times analysis of L.A. Unified's assessment and grade data showed how grades fell significantly during school closures for students in Los Angeles. The gap in grades that existed before the pandemic between Black and Latino students and white and Asian counterparts widened to as much as 21 percentage points.

There were also significant gaps in the rate of students meeting University of California and California State University admissions requirements, which say students must complete certain courses with a C or better. During the 2018-19 school year, about 59% of students met the requirements. For the class of 2022, about 46% of students are on track to meet the requirements — with a gap of 17 percentage points or more



between Black and Latino students and white and Asian students. Officials have said they expect more seniors will meet the requirements before the end of the school year.

Despite the broad decline in grades, educators said the pandemic also showed how giving students extra opportunities led many to improve their marks. In the fall of the 2020-21 school year, after the district directed teachers to give students several extra weeks to make up their work, almost 15,000 grades were improved.

In the recent guidance, teachers were directed to base final academic grades on the "level of learning demonstrated in the quality of work, not the quantity of work completed" and mastery of standards.

"Just because I did not answer a test question correctly today doesn't mean I don't have the capacity to learn it tomorrow and retake a test," Yoshimoto-Towery said. "Equitable grading practices align with the understanding that as people we learn at different rates and in different ways and we need multiple opportunities to do so."

The district's guidance says academic grades should not be based on attendance, including unexcused absences, late work, engagement or behavior, which can be reflected in separate "citizenship" or "work habits" marks that do not count toward a student's GPA.

Students earning Ds and Fs should also have the opportunity to take an incomplete grade in order to have extra time to improve their grade or retake the course for a better grade or credit recovery.

Gary Garcia, principal at John Marshall High School in Los Feliz, said many teachers have been moving toward more equitable grading practices for years. But shifting away from traditional grading to basing grades on whether students have mastered standards is not easy.

"It is a heavy lift, which is difficult in this pandemic time with the challenges teachers face," Garcia said. "But, I think over time, over the next few years, we'll see more and more schools adopting mastery grading and learning."

Gavin Tierney, an assistant professor in the Department of Secondary Education at Cal State Fullerton, who teaches aspiring educators on equitably assessing students, agreed that asking teachers to fundamentally change their approach to grading — which often replicates what they experienced in school — requires more training and support.

"It's hard work to rethink how we are assessing and grading on a deep level," Tierney said. "We can't just say to teachers, 'do this work.' Because they're trying to just figure out how to get through a lesson a lot of times."

In San Diego, district officials said they were compelled to make changes following calls for social justice in the aftermath of Floyd's death and the pandemic's exposure of long-existing racial inequities.

"Our goal should not simply be to re-create the system in place before March 13, 2020. Rather, we should seek to reopen as a better system, one focused on rooting out systemic racism in our society," the board declared last summer.

Similar to Los Angeles, the San Diego changes include giving students opportunities to revise work and re-do tests. Teachers are to remove factors such as behavior, punctuality, effort and work habits from academic grades and shift them to a student's "citizenship" grade, which is often factored into sports and extra-curricular eligibility, said Nicole DeWitt, executive director in the district's office of leadership and learning.

Frederick M. Hess, director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank, said he thinks some of the changes seem sensible — like giving students a chance to retake tests. But he's skeptical of others, including removing deadlines and behavior from academic grades.

"The questions that are getting asked here are certainly worth asking," Hess said. "My concern is that by calling certain practices equitable and suggesting they are the right ones, what we risk doing is creating systems in which we tell kids it's OK to turn in your work late. That deadlines don't matter... And I don't think this sets kids up for successful careers or citizenship."

Thomas Guskey, author of "On Your Mark: Challenging the Conventions of Grading and Reporting," said the United States lags behind other countries in modernizing grading.

In Canada, for example, it's common for students to receive separate grades for academic achievement, participation, punctuality and effort. That makes each mark more meaningful than a grade that is a hodgepodge of factors that can vary from teacher to teacher.

"We in the United States are more bound by tradition in grading than any other developed nation in the world," Guskey said. Grading reform is not about watering down expectations; it's about ensuring that grades are meaningful and fair, he said.

"I want us to honor excellence," Guskey said. "I just want it done in ways that are defensible and not really pitting one kid against the other."

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Colorado activates crisis standards of care</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.9news.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/colorado-activates-crisis-standards-of-care-healthcare-staffing/73-7ef4857a-bd9e-46a8-9874-5c1376cb53f8">https://www.9news.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/colorado-activates-crisis-standards-of-care-healthcare-staffing/73-7ef4857a-bd9e-46a8-9874-5c1376cb53f8</a>
GIST	<p>DENVER — Colorado has activated the portion of its crisis standards of care (<a href="#">CSC</a>) plan that deals with staffing health care systems.</p> <p>The move allows hospitals to prioritize staff for emergencies and reduce the level of care provided for non-emergencies.</p> <p>The state said these standards do not impact anyone's access to acute emergency treatment, and they continue to encourage anyone who needs it to seek medical care.</p> <p>Individual health care systems must notify the <a href="#">Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)</a> when they activate and deactivate <a href="#">crisis standards of care for staffing</a>.</p> <p>As of Tuesday, nearly 40% of facilities expect staffing shortages within the next week.</p> <p>The CSC allows hospitals to take steps to alleviate burnout, including minimizing meetings and relieving administrative responsibilities, reducing documentation requirements for health care workers and adjusting staff schedules.</p> <p>It gives hospitals the flexibility to move staff, and it offers guidelines for how and when family members can help with feeding and bathing to free up workers. It even provides legal protection if care isn't what usually would be standard.</p> <p>The state said under <a href="#">the CSC</a>, hospital staff will receive cross-training, and healthcare workers can participate in other training to take over positions.</p> <p>"If you get into a car accident, if you have a heart attack, if your sugars are really high and you have a diabetic emergency, all of those things mean that you may have a different level of care had you not come in today versus six months ago," said Dr. Comilla Sasson who works in an emergency department in Denver.</p> <p>The state said while there has not been a statewide pause on elective procedures, individual hospitals can choose to pause these procedures in order to reassign staff.</p>

	<p>"We would normally need to have one nurse for every three people on a medical floor, but because we are so crowded and we just don't have enough nursing staff, we might end up having one nurse for every four or five or six people on a medical floor," said Dr. Matt Wynia who helped craft Colorado's CSC during the pandemic.</p> <p>The state is not activating the portions of the <a href="#">crisis standards of care</a> that deal with emergency medical services, hospital and acute care facilities, out-of-hospital care providers, specialty patient populations or personal protective equipment.</p> <p>Colorado has activated a portion of <a href="#">the crisis standards of care plan</a> at least once since it was implemented in April 2020. On April 7, 2020, the state activated the portion that deals with personal protective equipment. <a href="#">That CSC was deactivated</a> on June 30, 2021.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Minnesota spike nears 'high risk' threshold</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2021/11/09/covid-19-in-mn-latest-positivity-rate-nears-high-risk-threshold/">https://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2021/11/09/covid-19-in-mn-latest-positivity-rate-nears-high-risk-threshold/</a>
GIST	<p><b>MINNEAPOLIS (WCCO)</b> — A day after warning that COVID-19 case numbers are <a href="#">among the highest seen this year</a>, Minnesota health officials reported 7,173 additional cases and 20 more deaths.</p> <p>The Tuesday update from the Minnesota Department of Health contains data from over the weekend and is current as of Monday morning. There have now been 826,404 total positive cases recorded in the state since the pandemic began, with over 8,800 of those cases being reinfections.</p> <p>As for the death toll, 8,882 total deaths have now been attributed to COVID-19 in Minnesota. One of the 20 newly reported deaths involved a person in their late 40s in Ramsey County; 17 of the deaths were in November.</p> <p>In hospitals as of Monday, there were over 1,100 patients being treated for COVID-19. Nearly 250 of them need intensive care unit beds. Over 42,000 COVID-19 cases have required hospitalization.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the positivity rate in Minnesota continues to spike and the latest figure stands at 9.1%, which is nearing the state's "high risk" threshold at 10%. The state's case growth and hospitalization rate are also on an upward trend.</p> <p>"Recent numbers are among the highest we've seen so far in 2021," MDH said Monday. "Sadly, the pandemic is far from over. It's important to get vaccinated, wear a mask in public, get tested when needed, and stay home if you're sick."</p> <p>MDH says newly reported cases from Tuesday do not include cases awaiting intake processing.</p> <p>"Over the past weekend COVID-19 case growth exceeded intake capacity, resulting in a temporary backlog. We are taking steps to increase staff capacity, but we anticipate this backlog will impact newly reported cases for the next few days," MDH said.</p> <p>At this point, 67.1% of those ages 5 years old and up have received at least one vaccine dose. In the 5- to 11-year-old age group, which is the most recently approved group to get the vaccine, 9,442 children have received at least one dose.</p> <p>Over 7.1 million vaccine doses have been administered.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Covid hospitalizations rising in California</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.msn.com/en-us/weather/topstories/covid-19-hospitalizations-rising-in-parts-of-california-a-potentially-ominous-sign/ar-AAQuNrG">https://www.msn.com/en-us/weather/topstories/covid-19-hospitalizations-rising-in-parts-of-california-a-potentially-ominous-sign/ar-AAQuNrG</a>
GIST	<p>COVID-19 hospitalizations have risen significantly in the Inland Empire and Central Valley, bringing new concerns about whether the shift represents a precursor to a wider spike in COVID-19 in California as the winter holidays approach.</p> <p>Across the state, both cases and hospitalizations hit a plateau after months of decline. Hospitalizations have remained fairly flat in some areas with relatively high vaccination rates, including the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles County.</p> <p>But in some areas with lower vaccination rates, such as Riverside, San Bernardino and Fresno counties, conditions are deteriorating, with hospitalizations up by more than 20% in recent weeks. And even some places with relatively high vaccination rates are seeing COVID-19 hospitalizations tick upward; in Orange County, COVID-19 hospitalizations are up by 16% since Halloween.</p> <p>Health officials have been warning about a potential new rise in COVID-19 in California as seniors who got their shots last winter — and haven't received a booster shot — may start <a href="#">to see their immunity wane</a>, leaving them exposed to greater risk for infection and hospitalization, and as people gather indoors more as the weather cools and the holidays approach.</p> <p>Demand for booster shots has fallen below expectation in California. And each infected Californian is increasingly spreading the coronavirus to more people; as of Saturday, computer models <a href="#">estimated</a> that every infected Californian was spreading the virus on average to 0.96 other people; if that number rises above 1, that will set the stage for further growth of the pandemic.</p> <p>"COVID cases are beginning to rise. Winter months [mean] people indoors and more possibilities for spread," Gov. Gavin Newsom tweeted <a href="#">Tuesday morning</a>.</p> <p>"Keep your immunity up," he added. "Get your booster."</p> <p>Officials are hopeful that strict vaccination requirements in some of California's most populated areas will help slow the spread of cases in the winter. In Los Angeles, a <a href="#">new city rule</a> generally requiring patrons to show proof of full vaccination to enter venues like indoor restaurants, gyms, movie theaters, and hair and nail salons went into effect Monday, but <a href="#">won't be enforced</a> until after Thanksgiving.</p> <p>Only weeks ago, officials in the San Joaquin Valley were optimistic that trends were headed in the right direction. But now, officials say hospitals in Fresno County, the most populous county in the region, "really have never left the crisis," said Dan Lynch, director of the Central California Emergency Medical Services Agency.</p> <p>"The bigger hospitals are probably between 110% to 130% of normal capacity. And they are all holding ICU patients, again, back in their emergency departments," Lynch said. "We're seeing the hospital emergency departments overwhelmed."</p> <p>Most hospitals have been forced to postpone scheduled surgeries, and some patients needing specialty care may need to be referred to other parts of California, officials said.</p> <p>Many of the COVID-19 patients needing hospitalization are unvaccinated people in their 30s, 40s and 50s, said Fresno County interim health officer Dr. Rais Vohra. Fresno County on Wednesday was forced to reimplement a measure to no longer automatically transport all 9-1-1 patients to emergency rooms, a policy it had ended on Oct. 22 because officials thought the region's surge of the Delta variant was fading.</p> <p>"If you asked me two weeks ago what I thought would happen, I really thought that we were going to have a nice, relaxing November," Vohra said. Now, "it's been very humbling just because this pandemic keeps throwing us curveballs and this November plateau is really keeping us very busy."</p>

Of California's five regions as defined by the state Department of Public Health, the San Joaquin Valley has the worst COVID-19 hospitalization rate, with 25 COVID-19 hospitalizations for every 100,000 residents; followed by rural Northern California, which has a rate of 16 and the Greater Sacramento area, with a rate of 14.

The statewide rate is 10, and the two most populous regions have rates below that: Southern California's rate is 8, while the Bay Area's is 4. Some experts believe it's a sign of [concern](#) when COVID-19 hospitalization rates are 5 or greater for every 100,000 residents.

Within Southern California's most populated areas, the Inland Empire has the worst COVID-19 hospitalization rates, with San Bernardino and Riverside counties reporting respective rates of 14 and 11. San Diego County is reporting 8; Orange County, 7; L.A. County, 6 and Ventura County, 4.

Since mid-October, COVID-19 hospitalizations have risen by more than 27% in both San Bernardino and Fresno counties; while in Riverside County, numbers are up by 21% over the last two weeks.

While health officials have largely been optimistic that the state's relatively high level of vaccine coverage will keep conditions from deteriorating to the devastating extent seen last fall and winter, the turning of the calendar carries a host of additional risks.

Colder weather, even in normally balmy parts of California, will increasingly push people to gather indoors — where the risk of coronavirus transmission is higher. There's also an apparent seasonality to the coronavirus itself, which makes it easier to spread when temperatures fall.

A packed slate of holidays will also entice people to travel and gather, possibly to an extent not seen since the pandemic began.

Add it all up, and you have a potent recipe for another potential coronavirus resurgence.

It's already happening in other parts of the nation.

"Even in highly vaccinated places like New Hampshire and Vermont, you can see how these northern most tiers of counties are starting to develop outbreaks and more transmission, as is Alaska," Dr. George Rutherford, a UC San Francisco epidemiologist and infectious diseases expert, said [recently](#) at a campus forum.

The biggest concentration of coronavirus cases has expanded from Montana, Idaho, North Dakota and Wyoming, and is spreading farther south, through Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona.

States with both low vaccination rates, like Wyoming, where only 44.4% of residents are fully vaccinated, are seeing among the nation's highest case rates, as are several states with vaccination rates similar to California's 61.8%, such as Colorado (62.1%), New Mexico (62.5%) and Minnesota (61.6%), Rutherford said.

That's why Colorado, New Mexico and Minnesota could be warning signs of California's future, Rutherford said. Those three states have weekly coronavirus case rates that are triple to what California is reporting now; Wyoming's is more than 3½ times worse than California's.

Rutherford said, relatively speaking, L.A., Orange and Ventura counties are doing well, but warned that San Diego, Riverside and San Bernardino counties have a fairly high level of cases.

These factors all suggest that it is urgent that unvaccinated people get their shots, including children age 5 to 11 who just became eligible last week, Rutherford said. People who have recovered from COVID-19 still need to get immunized, too; a [study](#) published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [said](#) COVID-19 survivors who remained unvaccinated were [five times](#) more likely to get a new coronavirus infection compared with fully vaccinated people who had never been infected.

And people who are immunocompromised or are seniors need to get additional vaccinations to improve their immunity, Rutherford said. The CDC says that less than 33% of fully vaccinated California seniors age 65 and over have received a booster dose, "which is a big problem that needs to be addressed," Rutherford said.

That means there's a race to get more seniors boosted before their immunity wanes too much, Rutherford said.

A [study](#) published in the journal Science recently showed that all three COVID-19 vaccines available to Americans have lost some of their protective power, with vaccine efficacy among a large group of veterans dropping between 35% and 85%.

Some experts have already expressed hope that the worst of the pandemic is over and another surge is unlikely. Other experts, including Rutherford, are not so sure. While Rutherford said he expected that California "should be out of this by spring," November will probably be decisive in giving us a clue in how the rest of the fall and winter will unfold.

"If we get out on the other side of it and have high levels of people vaccinated, a lot of vaccine coverage, then I think we might be able to really kind of throw the masks away, return to normal," Rutherford said. "It's not inconceivable that the Bay Area and urban Southern California could really walk away with high levels of vaccination — especially if we can get it into these younger kids — that will really create something that looks like herd immunity."

Rutherford added: "If not, then we're gonna have to string this out longer."

Part of the pandemic's future in California, too, will depend on getting more people around the world vaccinated, reducing the risk of an even more problematic variant emerging, Rutherford said.

L.A. County's months-old mandate to wear masks in indoor public places will likely be in place through the end of the calendar year. Special state rules for so-called mega-events, which were initially set to expire this month, have instead been extended indefinitely.

"We're worried about the winter, I'll just be honest," L.A. County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer said during a recent briefing. "We don't like what we're seeing in Europe. We know there's seasonality to this virus, we can't escape that reality. We know that people go indoors more, even here in L.A. County, when the weather gets colder. And we know the holidays are coming."

According to [a recent survey](#) commissioned by the American Hotel and Lodging Assn., 29% of Americans said they were likely to travel for Thanksgiving — up from 21% last year. The share of people who said they were likely to do so for Christmas, 33%, was also up from last year's 24%.

Of those surveyed, 58% said they were planning to vacation somewhere within driving distance on account of the pandemic.

Unlike last year, health officials aren't directly recommending [residents avoid traveling](#) for the holidays. Instead, they're reiterating the importance of taking precautions.

"This is where people, vaccinated or not, should really continue to practice the preventive measures we've been talking about from the beginning of this pandemic, which includes washing your hands frequently, [wearing a mask](#), trying to keep your distance, being in well-ventilated areas," said Dr. Regina Chinsio-Kwong, a deputy health officer for Orange County.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/most-cargo-containers-vanished-after-falling-overboard-from-ship-near-victoria-b-c/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/most-cargo-containers-vanished-after-falling-overboard-from-ship-near-victoria-b-c/</a>
GIST	<p>Of the 109 cargo containers that went overboard from the Zim Kingston, a cargo ship that <a href="#">caught fire near British Columbia last month</a>, 105 have not been seen, according to the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG).</p> <p>In all, 57 tons of potassium amyl xanthate, used in mines and pulp mills, and thiourea dioxide, used to manufacture textiles, were aboard the Zim Kingston in four containers: two that fell overboard and the two that caused the onboard fire.</p> <p>The two containers that went overboard containing hazardous materials are among those that have not been sighted, according to the CCG.</p> <p>Four containers washed ashore on the west coast of Vancouver Island and broke open in heavy weather, according to the CCG, <a href="#">spilling floor mats, inflatable toys and lots of refrigerators on the otherwise pristine beaches</a>.</p> <p>Cleanup efforts are being overseen by the CCG, First Nations and a host of environmental agencies. The contractor hired by the ship's owner and cleanup crews are deploying as it is safe, the CCG said.</p> <p>At Raft Cove, where one of the containers beached, 95% of the contents have been loaded into debris bags that are being prepared for a helicopter lift. Crews will then cut up the container and prepare it for removal, the Canadian Coast Guard said on Monday.</p> <p>The 853-foot-long ship left South Korea on Oct. 5, bound for Vancouver, B.C. But it drifted in gale force winds about 40 miles off the coast of Cape Flattery on the Olympic Peninsula, and containers spilled off when the ship listed 35 degrees. Initially, <a href="#">40 containers were reported lost</a>.</p> <p>Two days later, hazardous material in two cargo containers that remained onboard caused the vessel to catch fire.</p> <p>Where containers that fell overboard from the large container ship, Zim Kingston, were floating last month.</p> <p>The Zim Kingston remains at sea off Constance Bank, Victoria, the Canadian Coast Guard <a href="#">said Friday</a>, but the work to stabilize the vessel and its cargo is complete.</p> <p>Following a marine safety inspection, a comprehensive review of the actions taken to stabilize the damaged and dislodged containers, and a review of the vessel's proposed transit risk mitigations, Transport Canada has lifted its order for the vessel to remain at anchor, the CCG said.</p> <p>The vessel is cleared to move to a berth or anchorage within the jurisdiction of either the Nanaimo or the Vancouver Fraser port authorities, but it had not been moved as of Monday, according to Kiri Westnedge, a spokesperson for the CCG.</p> <p>The decision on when to proceed will be made by the ship's master and the assigned BC Coast marine pilot, and take into account weather and other conditions, she said in an update on Friday.</p> <p>"It is important to note that there has been no damage to the ship that would interfere with its safe navigation," the Unified Command for the MV Zim Kingston incident said in a statement. "However, out of an abundance of caution, a comprehensive plan, with support from multiple agencies, will be in place during the ship's transit. The plan focuses on support during transit, as well as puts contingencies in place to address any occurrences with the ship or cargo during the short voyage to port."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/10 Vax rate for city workers outpaces public
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nbcnews.com/data-graphics/covid-vaccination-mandates-city-workers-caused-backlash-data-show-re-w-rcna4895">https://www.nbcnews.com/data-graphics/covid-vaccination-mandates-city-workers-caused-backlash-data-show-re-w-rcna4895</a>
GIST	<p>The Covid-19 vaccination rate for municipal workers who are required to get shots outpaces that of the general public in several major U.S. cities, a sign that mandates have been effective despite <a href="#">protests and lawsuits</a>.</p> <p>NBC News compiled employee vaccination data from 20 cities that are mandating the shots and found that the rates for city employees — a group that includes health care workers, police officers, sanitation workers and firefighters — are about 15 percentage points higher than for the rest of the general populations of the cities or counties they work in.</p> <p>Nationally, about 79 percent of municipal workers in cities surveyed are fully vaccinated against Covid, well above the country's overall rate of 58 percent.</p> <p>San Francisco, Seattle and San Jose, California, had some of the highest public employee vaccination rates, with 94 percent to 97 percent of their workforces having been vaccinated. And in New York City, where <a href="#">9,000 unvaccinated employees were placed on unpaid leave</a> for not complying with the city's mandate, the municipal vaccination rate is 91 percent.</p> <p>New York was one of the worst-hit cities at the start of the pandemic, and to date <a href="#">about 30,000 residents</a> have died from Covid. In San Francisco, which enacted <a href="#">a vaccination mandate</a> to enter bars, restaurants and gyms, <a href="#">670 people have already died</a>. Santa Clara County, where San Jose is located, <a href="#">lost about 1,800 residents</a> to Covid.</p> <p>Stephanie Formas, the chief of staff for Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan, said that following the science and the data has been the city's North Star throughout the pandemic. The Seattle region was one of the first hit by Covid, with the one of the <a href="#">earliest recorded deaths in February</a>.</p> <p>"When we introduced our vaccine mandates for city employees ... we did it with the united front, because all of us believed how important it was to protect our employees," she said.</p> <p>Formas attributed the recent increase in vaccination rates to a paid leave program that was <a href="#">launched in September</a>.</p> <p>"We're really proud of this proposal for employees," she said. "They were able to receive eight hours of paid time off. ... We also created a paid leave program for any employee that submitted their vaccine verification. And that would mean 80 hours for employees who got vaccinated but might have to miss work if they are exposed to a breakthrough case or their child is exposed or needs to quarantine."</p> <p>Los Angeles is the only city of the 20 in the analysis where the municipal Covid vaccination rate was lower than that of the general population; 74 percent of city workers are vaccinated, just short of the city's overall rate of 79 percent. The lower rate is attributed to fewer vaccinations among the city's parks and street services employees, as well as its police and firefighters.</p> <p>But that isn't the norm.</p> <p>Police and firefighter vaccination rates lag behind those of other municipal workers in most cities, the data show. Health experts say the trend is worrying, as first responders are at a higher risk of infection because of the nature of their jobs.</p> <p>"Somebody working from home is not going to spread the virus, that's for sure. But somebody who's working in a public facility and going face to face with people ... they run the risk of infecting other people if they're infected," said Dr. Robert Lahita, the director of the Institute for Autoimmune and Rheumatic Diseases at St. Joseph's Health in Paterson, New Jersey.</p> <p>"Mandated emergency personnel should be vaccinated," he said. "It's common sense."</p>

Unions representing police officers and firefighters have protested mandates and clashed publicly with officials. The issue is so contentious that Charlotte, North Carolina, [mandated that only new employees](#) get vaccinated. In Chicago, a judge [halted a vaccination mandate for police officers](#) on Nov. 1, saying the issue should be handled through arbitration.

Seattle is still negotiating with the Seattle Police Officers Guild, which [said the mandate is contributing](#) to a “public safety staffing crisis.”

Anna Esquivel, a nurse with Chicago’s Public Health Department, said: “I think, especially here in the United States, there’s not a lot of mandates, and people tend to not like it when the government says ‘this is what you need to do’ ... even if it’s for your own good or even if it’s to protect yourself.”

Esquivel administers vaccines in public schools and shelters and at a massive vaccination drive at the city’s United Center, which hosts Chicago Bulls and Chicago Blackhawks games. She said that the mandate was supposed to make the city workers feel safe but that many of the workers she has spoken to have concerns.

“People still have some reservations,” she said, “and what I hear the most is that people feel that the vaccine was rushed.”

As of Monday, about 17 percent of Chicago’s workforce, or [nearly 5,000 employees](#), had still not been vaccinated, nearly half of whom were from the police department.

Esquivel said she knows people in the health department who still aren’t vaccinated, but she still advised hesitant workers to get the shots.

“I would tell them that the vaccine is going to keep you safe. No vaccine is 100 percent effective, but it’s going to protect you, and it’s going to keep you from dying,” she said.

The findings may presage vaccination mandates for private-sector employees, many of whom would fall under a [federal mandate](#) issued in September by President Joe Biden. The mandate would require all employers with 100 or more employees to ensure that their workforces are [fully vaccinated by Jan. 4 or undergo weekly testing](#). [A federal appeals court halted the rule](#) Saturday as lawsuits from several Republican-led states make their way through the legal system.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/10 Myanmar junta: US journalist terrorism</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20211110-myanmar-junta-charges-detained-us-journalist-with-terrorism-sedition">https://www.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20211110-myanmar-junta-charges-detained-us-journalist-with-terrorism-sedition</a>
GIST	<p><b>Myanmar’s junta has charged a US journalist detained since May with sedition and terrorism, which carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, his lawyer said Wednesday.</b></p> <p>The <a href="#">Southeast Asian country</a> has been mired in chaos since a <a href="#">February coup</a>, with the military trying to crush widespread democracy protests and stamp out dissent.</p> <p>Danny Fenster, who was <a href="#">arrested as he tried to leave the country in May</a>, was charged under anti-terror and sedition laws, his lawyer Than Zaw Aung told AFP.</p> <p>Conviction under the counter-terrorism law carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.</p> <p>The trial is scheduled to begin on November 16.</p> <p>Fenster, 37, had been working for local outlet <a href="#">Frontier Myanmar</a> for around a year and was heading home to see his family when he was detained.</p>

He is [already on trial](#) for allegedly encouraging dissent against the military, unlawful association and breaching immigration law, and is being held in Yangon's Insein prison.

"He has become quite thin," Than Zaw Aung said.

Fenster was "disappointed" at being hit with the new charges, which were filed on Tuesday, he added.

They come days after former US diplomat and hostage negotiator Bill Richardson met junta chief Min Aung Hlaing in the capital Naypyidaw, handing the increasingly isolated junta some rare publicity.

Richardson has previously negotiated the release of prisoners and US servicemen in North Korea, Cuba, Iraq and Sudan and has recently sought to free US-affiliated inmates in Venezuela.

The former UN ambassador said he was hopeful he had brokered a deal for a resumption of visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross to prisons—which have been filled with political prisoners.

Richardson, declining to give further details, said the State Department asked him not to raise Fenster's case during his visit.

### **Press clampdown**

Fenster is believed to have contracted [Covid-19](#) during his detention, family members said during a conference call with American journalists in August.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government.

More than 1,200 people have been killed by security forces in a crackdown on dissent, according to a local monitoring group.

The press has also been squeezed as the junta tries to tighten control over the flow of information, throttling internet access and revoking the licences of local media outlets.

Several journalists critical of the military government were among those released last month in a junta amnesty to mark a Buddhist festival.

More than 100 journalists have been arrested since the putsch, according to Reporting ASEAN, a monitoring group.

It says 31 are still in detention.

The coup snuffed out the country's short-lived experiment with democracy, with civilian leader [Aung San Suu Kyi](#) now facing a raft of charges in a junta court that could see her jailed for decades.

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HEADLINE	11/09 China: US lawmakers Taiwan trip 'sneaky'
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-taiwan-military-drills/2021/11/10/7bc5a63e-41d2-11ec-9404-50a28a88b9cd_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-taiwan-military-drills/2021/11/10/7bc5a63e-41d2-11ec-9404-50a28a88b9cd_story.html</a>
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan — The use of a United States Navy aircraft to fly U.S. lawmakers to Taiwan for a routine trip this week drew a barrage of accusations and a fresh display of military might from China over what it dubbed a "sneaky" visit.</p> <p>Beijing claims Taiwan, the self-governing island of 24 million, as part of its sovereign territory and threatens to take it by force if the democratically elected government in Taipei declares legal independence from China.</p>

As part of efforts to force Taiwan to submit to Chinese Communist Party rule, Beijing is sensitive to indications of Taipei developing stronger military ties with Washington, despite the United States being committed to supporting the island to maintain its military defenses under the Taiwan Relations Act.

An unannounced visit by U.S. lawmakers has become the latest focus of Beijing's ire, after Taiwanese aircraft enthusiasts on Tuesday evening spotted a Boeing C-40A plane registered to the United States military that took off from Clark Air Base in the Philippines and landed at Taipei's Songshan Airport.

In response to questions from local media, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the flight's itinerary was coordinated with American Institute in Taiwan, the United States' de facto embassy, adding that it would release more details later.

Pentagon press secretary John F. Kirby on Tuesday told reporters that it was a congressional, not Pentagon, delegation and added that such visits to Taiwan are "fairly routine" and often make use of military aircraft.

But China, always on trigger-alert for indications of greater American support for Taiwan, responded with characteristic anger on Wednesday.

Ministry of Defense spokesman Tan Kefei called the visit "sneaky." "The Chinese People's Liberation Army will stay on high alert at all times and take all necessary measures to resolutely smash any interference by external forces and 'Taiwan independence' separatist plots," he said in a statement.

The Eastern Theater Command on Tuesday night launched combat readiness drills near the Taiwan Strait, which it declared "targeted the seriously wrong behavior of the relevant country," a rare reversal of the PLA's standard practice of denying that its maneuvers target a particular country. Taiwan's Ministry of Defense reported six Chinese warplanes had flown into Taiwan's air defense identification zone that day.

Confirmation last month from Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen that U.S. troops had been taking part in training programs on the island — an unusual public acknowledgment of long-standing exchanges — drew stern warnings from Beijing.

China, spurred by severe distrust of Tsai and her efforts to bolster Taiwan's international image, has escalated military saber-rattling by sending increasingly large numbers of bombers and fighter jets to near the periphery of the island's airspace, as part of "gray zone" tactics to wear down Taiwan's defenses with a gradual ratcheting up of aggression that stops just short of conflict.

Despite warnings from Taiwan and the United States that these activities risk miscalculations and could spill into conflict, China has continued to advertise its maneuvers to boost patriotism at home, arguing that it is defending the national interest and deterring "independence forces" in Taiwan.

On Wednesday, the PLA's combat drills were the top trending item on Chinese microblog Weibo, where political content is carefully curated by censors.

"The current situation is that everyone wants global peace, but we cannot rely on people in Taiwan coming to their senses to bring about unification," one popular post read. "By showing that we aren't afraid to fight, and have the courage and determination to fight to victory, we can shock those Taiwan secessionists and avoid the situation becoming hopeless."

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HEADLINE	11/09 Real costs of child care in Washington, US
SOURCE	<a href="https://crosscut.com/news/2021/11/real-costs-child-care-america">https://crosscut.com/news/2021/11/real-costs-child-care-america</a>
GIST	Mary Curry has run a child care business from her two-story home on a quiet street in south Tacoma for nine years. Before the pandemic, the business ran at capacity, with a few employees helping care for a dozen children. Now it's just her, taking care of four kids. The finances were never very good, but during the pandemic Curry has been losing money operating her business in accordance with Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention guidelines. She said she has kept her doors open out of a sense of mission to help her community and “my families.”

Child care in Washington state and in the U.S. is a broken economic system, according to providers and other experts. The pieces just don’t fit, despite small and large efforts to fix the problem.

Even care that meets only minimum licensing standards is too expensive for many parents, yet child care providers cannot pay their workers a living wage. The providers cannot raise prices because if they do, they will lose customers. They cannot reduce their work force — which makes up 60% or more of their budget — because laws and the realities of caring for small children mean that they must keep ratios of workers to children low.

So the parents struggle, many child care workers do not make enough money to take care of their own families without government assistance, and providers scrape by or close their doors.

A lot of attention has been paid to the problem recently, in both Washington state and Washington, D.C., but many experts think the changes are still not enough. They look to places like [Finland](#), where quality child care is heavily subsidized and generous [paid parental leave](#) is available. The [results](#): high enrollment in preschool and strong educational outcomes.

In contrast, states in the U.S. provide far less funding and face other constraints, forcing difficult trade-offs related to child care: “Do you give money to the single mom working, or the parent looking for training? Do you have lower-quality care for more children, or better quality for fewer children?” asked Gina Adams, a senior fellow at the [Urban Institute](#), a nonprofit research organization.

Experts say that while the profit or loss margins are still razor-thin in the child care industry, there are things that can be done within the current system to help, like shared business services for child care providers, free or subsidized use of real estate and subsidized health insurance for child care workers.

Can the public and private sectors do enough to “[reinvent](#)” the current market, or will federal and state governments have to radically shift how and to what extent they fund child care?

### **The costs of delivering care**

The primary reason child care costs so much is that teacher-to-child [ratios](#) are kept low for infants and toddlers in order to provide safe, nurturing environments. In Washington state, those ratios are one care worker to four infants, one worker to seven toddlers, and one worker to 10 preschoolers. Thus, labor costs make up 60% to 80% of a child care provider’s budget, even though child care and preschool teachers here typically [earn](#) a little less than \$16 per hour — below the median pay of fast-food cooks.

In Washington state, the [prices](#) families pay for care far exceed neighboring Idaho and Oregon. And the true costs to providers for high-quality, center-based care surpass the national average by several thousand dollars.

[Louise Stoney](#) is an independent consultant and co-founder of both the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance and the Opportunities Exchange, a nonprofit consulting group focused on early care and education. She argued that most people who are good at finance can run a large, high-quality preschool care program with decent wages. It’s the finances behind caring for infants and toddlers at a center that pose the greater challenge: “I don’t see how you do it for less than \$25,000 per year,” she said — that is \$25,000 per year, per child.

Stoney and her associate, Libbie Poppick, developed a concept they call the “[iron triangle](#)” of minimum prerequisites for early childhood education providers to turn a dependable profit: full enrollment, full fee collection and revenue that cover per-child cost (“accurate pricing”). For example, some providers still accept cash and checks from parents, instead of automatically billing their bank accounts, resulting in late and uncollectible payments that quickly add up in a business with such slim margins.

The iron triangle also assumes that providers can take advantage of technology, such as child care management software, or shared services to manage their businesses more efficiently.

[Shared services alliances](#) refer to providers that pool resources to share systems and people for accounting, human resources, regulatory compliance and other administrative work. In [Oregon](#), child care providers are piloting a shared services alliance in several regions after promising results from a smaller pilot in two rural counties. Washington's [Fair Start for Kids Act](#), signed into law in May 2021, authorized creation of a "shared services business hub," and recently awarded a grant for the pilot project.

Seattle already has a pilot [program](#) along those lines to help family providers participate in the city's preschool program.

Stoney sees economies of scale and shared services as making room for higher teacher wages. "What shared services is really about is shifting dollars from administration into the classroom," she said. "Providers have to either get bigger or network bigger. No one has ever pushed the field to do this. We've made administrative costs too high. And we don't make efficiency a value."

In the Seattle area, [Sound Child Care Solutions](#) is a nonprofit that shares administrative services and fundraising across eight separate child care centers that have common values and goals. Emily Adams, director of development and communications, said they see shared services as a way to enable center directors to focus on programming and invest more in supporting teachers to deliver high-quality care. Given the large number of immigrant and refugee families at some centers, those directors and teaching staff need extra time to incorporate different languages and cultures into their programming, as well as to receive training to address traumatic experiences within families. As a "value driven" organization, it also prioritizes equitable pay and comprehensive benefits for center directors and teaching staff, she said.

Some experts suggest that child care centers must have at least 100 full-time slots to make administrative overhead manageable, and that 300 slots are better. But [most](#) child care centers and school-age kid programs are small and thus unable to benefit from any economies of scale.

Family providers — that is, care based in a provider's home — can care for infants and toddlers at lower costs, but Stoney said states need to stop regulating them as though they were tiny child care centers.

Guadalupe Magallan of Kennewick had been working 10-hour days taking care of kids in her home and then working evenings and weekends on administrative tasks. She recently hired an assistant to help with the office work.

"I can't work all these hours with the children and still do all the administrative stuff to make sure I'm sticking to all the regulations and managing the paperwork, IRS, quarterly taxes, salary and more," she said. Like Curry, she is currently losing money.

States are buying into the idea of helping providers buy and run software to assist with management needs. New Mexico recently partnered with [Wonderschool](#) to use its technology platform to assist child care providers, especially small centers and family providers.

Washington state providers told InvestigateWest about other ways in addition to looking at staff ratios and scale that governments could further assist them:

- To help with what one child care company executive called "astronomically unaffordable" real estate prices, cities or counties could designate some commercial locations as low-rent, highly subsidized properties for nonprofit child care providers.
- The state's [Early Learning Facilities program](#) already offers grants or very low-interest loans to providers seeking to open or expand their facilities. These providers must serve low-income families that use state subsidies to pay for child care. In the next few years, about [\\$40 million](#) will be available, including money to help providers apply.
- The state could streamline its 90-day approval process for new child care sites, so that providers are not paying rent for several months before a center can open and begin making money.



- The state could create a shared risk pool for small providers to buy health insurance for their workers and workers' families. A new [program](#) funded by the state will provide free health insurance for child care workers whose households earn less than 300% of the federal poverty level. But it will not cover all workers, nor any dependents.

And, finally, providers face the [high costs of low-wage jobs](#) in the form of worker training and turnover expenses. They want to figure out how to pay child care workers more, with wages and benefits that adequately value their work, in part so that workers will stay longer and providers won't have to continuously train replacements.

State and federal support is already a key factor in the labyrinthine world of child care finance. Regional and state entities, such as Washington state's Educational Service Districts, or [ESDs](#), help deliver and add to federal aid for providers and parents. The service districts are public entities that "provide cooperative services" across public, tribal and some private schools offering K-12 education.

In south central Washington, for instance, [ESD 105](#)'s early learning program serves kids as a contractor for the federal Head Start program and for the [Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program](#) (ECEAP), which provide free preschool and supportive services for low-income families.

Stacie Marez, director of ECEAP and community partnerships at ESD 105, said the high rate of turnover resulting from low wages and lack of benefits means ECEAP programs at child care centers are constantly having to train new workers. When the three-year professional development cycle finishes, she said, "it's just about the time we lose them to the school district."

The school district can run state-funded ECEAP programs with better pay and benefits because of the district's diversified funding sources, centralized administration (like shared services) and absorption of some ECEAP programs' expenses, such as utilities and classroom space.

### **The prices we pay for care**

Child care providers bill what they think community families can pay, not what it costs to run a financially stable business. But those "private pay" rates, also known as market rates, aren't always high enough to keep providers in business.

The state sets [Working Connections](#) Child Care subsidy rates based on surveys that show what providers are charging in a particular area of the state. Working Connections is a program for low-income families with children up to 12 years old. The process to set rates for ECEAP-funded slots is more complicated.

Families eligible for subsidies find a participating provider to accept their children. The state then pays the provider. With ECEAP, parents pay nothing; with Working Connections, parents pay a share of that rate as a copayment, from [zero to \\$215 per month](#), depending on their income.

Even if the subsidy rates were 100% of market rate, they would underpay many providers. The Fair Start for Kids Act just increased Working Connections subsidies from 65% to 85% of market rate and raised ECEAP rates by 10%.

That should help. But as Joel Ryan, executive director of the [Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP](#), said, "Maybe we can get the subsidy rate high enough that it's not terrible, but it doesn't offset the real costs of child care." Many providers will still face a loss from the state's rates, and most families will continue to pay full price.

Mary Curry estimated that, for this past spring, her costs per child per month were about \$1,200, but the state subsidy rate was about \$750 to \$800. Curry had been making it work, in part, by reluctantly keeping staff expenses low, as so many providers do. "Funding was so low, but I could make it work because my children were grown and I didn't have to support them at home anymore," she said. "My husband is the one who gives me this opportunity to do this, because he carries the overhead."



The city of Seattle is planning a cost-of-quality-care study, as is Washington state. The state's [report](#) isn't due until November 2022. The text of the Fair Start for Kids Act says the Legislature's intent is to increase subsidy rates gradually, until they cover the full cost of high-quality care. Only a few states are doing this.

According to a [model](#) developed by the Center for American Progress, a policy institute that supports "progressive ideas," the Washington subsidy rate covers just 45% to 71% of "high quality" care costs, depending on the age of the child and the type of facility. The [calculator](#) estimates that in Washington the average annual per-child cost for "base" quality care (that is, care that meets minimum state regulations) in a family child care setting is \$13,800. Investments to improve quality more than double that number, to \$33,700.

Much of this increased cost goes to salaries and benefits for child care workers, whose training, planning time and retention rate are critical components of high-quality care. A few years ago, the [Center for the Study of Child Care Employment](#) found that 39% of child care workers in Washington relied on at least one public income support program, at a cost of nearly \$35 million. Some refer to this as the [high public cost of low-wage jobs](#).

### **The road ahead**

The pandemic has made clear to some people that child care is a core part of keeping our entire economy running, akin to electricity and roads. At the federal level, Congress is considering multiple [proposals](#) that would infuse billions of dollars into the child care system. Yet, with one exception, that has always been a largely private system delivering a valuable public good.

During World War II, through the [Lanham Act](#), Congress established subsidized child care services to support the families whose adult factory workers or members of the military were not able to care for kids. Family income did not factor into eligibility.

A substantial body of [research](#) indicates that a society's investment in early childhood programs gives a strong return. In [Boston](#), quality preschool led to higher rates of high school graduation and college attendance, as well as lower rates of juvenile incarceration. But many payoffs from early learning investments are long term, while state budgets are hammered out every two years.

Governments can see one quick return on investment in the short term: from better-paid workers. "A high-quality child care system costs money, but a lot goes into the pockets of child care workers," said Simon Workman, a national expert on child care finance and founder of the consulting firm [Prenatal to Five Fiscal Strategies](#). "They spend it. It circles through the economy."

And yet these programs are not adequately funded in this country, according to providers and policy experts. For now, many families, particularly those with young children, remain stuck.

To that end, the [parent ambassador](#) program offered by the Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP has trained about 300 parents to advocate, educate and organize for quality early learning for all children. The 2021 legislative session felt like an exceptionally big win for advocates like the association. But the goal of a well-funded, well-supported system is still a long way off. And advocates wonder if they can repeat that success.

Some local providers and policy experts are cautiously optimistic that the state and national debate could shift permanently, to valuing quality child care from birth to age 12 as an essential need for everyone. But for now, Gina Adams of the Urban Institute said, "We have a market system that does not support good quality. ... Our public system only deals with a small part of the problem, with inadequate funding and inadequate public support."

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HEADLINE	11/10 Crowd surge not mentioned in festival plan
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/With-victims-ID-d-many-questions-remain-in-16604454.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/With-victims-ID-d-many-questions-remain-in-16604454.php</a>

HOUSTON (AP) — Emergency plans for the Astroworld music festival did not include protocols for dangerous crowd surges like the one that unfolded during a rush to see headliner Travis Scott, which left eight people dead and injured hundreds of others, including a 9-year-old boy whose family said was still in a coma on Tuesday.

The concert area in Houston where a crush of fans had pressed forward during the rapper's Friday night performance remains largely in place as authorities continue a criminal investigation. More than 20 lawsuits have already been filed, accusing organizers of failing to take simple crowd-control steps or staff properly.

Houston police, along with the fire department, played a key role in safety measures at the sold-out show that drew 50,000 people. The union head of the Houston Fire Department pushed back Tuesday, saying firefighters did not have a presence inside the festival and were not given radios to communicate directly with organizers.

Hundreds of people were treated for injuries on-site and at least 13 were hospitalized. They included a 9-year-old boy who attended the festival with his father but became separated as the crowd became dangerously packed, according to family members.

Bernon Blount said his grandson, Ezra, was in a medically induced coma at a Houston hospital and that the boy's heart, lungs and brain were injured in the melee.

"My son, once he had passed out from the pressure being applied to him during the concert, he passed out and Ezra fell into the crowd," Blount told The Associated Press. "When my son awakened, Ezra wasn't there."

A 56-page event operations plan for the Astroworld music festival included protocols for dangerous scenarios including an active shooter, bomb or terrorist threats, and severe weather. But it did not include information on what to do in the event of a crowd surge.

"In any situation where large groups of people are gathering, there is the potential for a civil disturbance/riot that can present a grave risk to the safety and security of employees and guests," the plan said. "The key in properly dealing with this type of scenario is proper management of the crowd from the minute the doors open. Crowd management techniques will be employed to identify potentially dangerous crowd behavior in its early stages in an effort to prevent a civil disturbance/riot."

Experts say crowd surge deaths happen because people are packed into a space so tightly that they are being squeezed and can't get oxygen. It's not usually because they're being trampled.

Authorities have said part of their investigation will include reviewing whether the concert promoter and others behind the festival adhered to the plans submitted.

Marty Lancton, president of the Houston Professional Fire Fighters Association, said firefighters had asked festival organizers for a radio so they could be in direct contact with each other. Lancton said firefighters were given a list of cellphone numbers to call during an emergency.

"We don't use cellphones for emergencies. We use radios. We need direct contact because as situations unfold, seconds matter," Lancton said.

He said a group of four firefighters were stationed inside a mobile command van in a nearby parking lot starting at 7 a.m. on Friday. Without direct communication with the festival organizers, the firefighters inside the van monitored six different radio frequencies to keep tabs on what was going on, he said.

Festival organizers had contracted with New York-based ParaDocs to handle all medical services at the festival. A 22-page plan the company submitted to local officials ahead of the festival said it estimated

70,000 attendees — more than the actual number of concertgoers — and planned for a daily staff of more than 80 emergency medics, doctors, registered nurses and supervisors.

ParaDocs said in a statement Tuesday the company had been “prepared for the size of the venue and the expected audience with a trained team of medics and EMT” and that it was cooperating with investigators.

Houston police and fire department investigators have said they are reviewing surveillance video provided by concert promoter Live Nation, as well as dozens of clips from people at the show that were widely shared on social media.

Scott, who founded the Astroworld festival, said he would cover funeral costs for the victims. The dead ranged in age from 14 to 27 and came from Texas, Illinois and Washington state, according to Harris County authorities. They included high schoolers, an aspiring Border Patrol agent and a computer science student.

Astroworld’s event operations and emergency medical response protocols filed with Harris County and obtained by the AP states “the potential for multiple alcohol/drug related incidents, possible evacuation needs, and the ever-present threat of a mass casualty situation are identified as key concerns.”

The festival was held on a parking lot that is part of NRG Park, a complex that consists of stadiums, an arena and a convention center.

Attorneys representing those injured or killed during the festival were granted access to the event’s grounds on Tuesday to inspect and photograph the site. Ryan MacLeod, who is representing several people hurt during the concert, said the area around where Scott had his concert seemed to have no place for people to exit once they went in.

There is a long history of similar catastrophes at concerts, as well as sporting and religious events. In 1979, 11 people were killed as thousands of fans tried to get into Cincinnati’s Riverfront Coliseum to see a concert by The Who. Other crowd catastrophes include the deaths of 97 people at a soccer match in Hillsborough Stadium in 1989 in Sheffield, England, and numerous disasters connected with the annual hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Seattle council mulls \$10M cut to SPD</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/seattle-city-council-mayor-and-mayor-elect-spar-over-proposed-10-million-police-cut/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/seattle-city-council-mayor-and-mayor-elect-spar-over-proposed-10-million-police-cut/</a>
GIST	<p>The Seattle City Council is mulling \$10 million in cuts to the Seattle Police Department budget to offset decreasing revenue, drawing criticism from the city’s mayor and mayor-elect as contrary to public safety.</p> <p>Budget Committee Chair Teresa Mosqueda introduced <a href="#">her proposed balanced budget package</a> Tuesday afternoon, suggesting the council make the cuts to the budget Mayor Jenny Durkan proposed in September.</p> <p>“Over the last seven weeks, we have diligently been working to try and to address many of the items that community members and council members have been flagging to make sure that we address the needs that are compounding throughout our city and invest in a more just and equitable Seattle,” Mosqueda said in her presentation on Tuesday.</p> <p>“By releasing today’s budget, we hope that what you see is significant investments and a vision for a more equitable, just safe, healthy and housed Seattle.”</p>

Since Durkan proposed her original \$7.1 billion budget in September, the city's projected revenue for 2022 fell by \$15 million, as large employers announced they would continue with remote work through early 2022, exempting employees from the city's JumpStart payroll tax.

"This proposed budget was balanced to an August revenue forecast by the city budget office that assumed nearly full return to work by major employers this fall," Council Central Staff Director Esther Handy said during the presentation. She said it appeared by September to be "possibly overly optimistic given the ongoing pandemic."

City Budget Office Director Ben Noble said Tuesday the August estimate could not predict the impact of the COVID-19 delta variant on the JumpStart tax, which will be collected for the first time in early 2022 from businesses with Seattle employees that make at least \$150,000 annually.

To offset the impact of the revenue decline, Mosqueda focused on cutting the police budget to preserve the council's priorities of addressing affordable housing, homelessness and criminal justice reform.

Durkan criticized Mosqueda's proposal, blaming recent staffing problems in SPD on the council. She said the proposal failed to prioritize public safety.

"City's Council's previous promise to defund SPD by 50%, their treatment of Chief (Carmen) Best and their previous layoff budget led to an exodus of 325 officers from SPD in the last two years," Durkan said. "Multiple plans to address hiring and retention proposed by Chief (Adrian) Diaz and I have been repeatedly rejected by a majority of council."

"And just yesterday, another council member proposed blocking my emergency hiring proposal that has already generated a tenfold increase in applications to 911 dispatch positions in Seattle," she said. "Continued cuts to SPD and underfunding the 911 center are not a plan for true public safety."

"We need alternatives to armed police responses, and we have significantly ramped up these alternatives," Durkan said. "But when someone calls 911 with a dangerous, potentially life-threatening emergency — we need enough police officers to respond."

Mayor-elect Bruce Harrell also criticized the proposal in a separate statement, saying the results of last week's election — [in which Harrell was elected over progressive City Council President M. Lorena González](#) — show the city's desire for public safety.

"Last Tuesday, the voters of Seattle resoundingly and unambiguously rejected defunding the police," Harrell said. "Our campaign expressed a clear message and commitment: We must deliver true community safety, ensure unbiased policing, and decrease length of response times by improving training, hiring more and better officers, creating unarmed and alternative responses, and changing the culture within SPD. That vision and those goals for improvement and reform cannot be achieved with this proposed \$10 million cut."

The council will be briefed on Mosqueda's proposal at 9 a.m. Wednesday and will hear from members of the public in a hearing at 5:30 p.m. All council meetings are currently remote and can be accessed at [seattle.gov/council](http://seattle.gov/council).

A final budget vote is expected Nov. 22.

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HEADLINE	11/09 Lawsuit against long-term care program
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/class-action-lawsuit-filed-against-new-washington-state-long-term-care-tax/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/class-action-lawsuit-filed-against-new-washington-state-long-term-care-tax/</a>

OLYMPIA — Opponents of a mandatory payroll tax to fund Washington state's new long-term care program filed a lawsuit Tuesday in federal court seeking to stop the January start of the payroll premium for most employees in the state.

The suit, filed with the federal court for the Western District of Washington, was filed on behalf of three businesses in the state and six individuals. None of the individuals purchased a private, long-term care insurance plan before Nov. 1, the deadline to qualify for an exemption.

Under the program, called WA Cares Fund, workers will pay a premium of .58% of total pay per paycheck, meaning an employee with a salary of \$50,000 will pay \$290 a year. Starting Jan. 1, 2025, people who need assistance with at least three "activities of daily living" such as bathing, dressing or administration of medication, can tap into the fund to pay for things like in-home care, home modifications like a wheelchair ramp and rides to the doctor.

The benefit also covers home-delivered meals and reimbursement to unpaid family caregivers. The lifetime maximum of the benefit is \$36,500, with annual increases to be determined based on inflation.

Washington's new long-term-care tax begins in January. Here's what to know about the program  
Answers to your questions on the new Washington Cares Fund and the long-term care payroll tax  
Why getting long-term care insurance in Washington is nearly impossible — and has been for months  
"The state simply does not have the power to mandate an employee benefit," Richard Birmingham, a partner at Davis Wright Tremaine LLP, said in a written statement announcing the lawsuit.

As of Nov. 4, the Employment Security Department had received more than 344,000 applications for an exemption, and just over 140,000 had been approved. Last week, agency spokesman Nick Demerice said that people seeking an exemption are being told that as long as they submit their exemption request by Dec. 1, ESD is guaranteeing that it will be processed it before the end of December.

Even though a private policy had to be purchased before Nov. 1 to opt out, people have until Dec. 31, 2022, to apply for an exemption — which means they may pay a year of the premium unless they opt out before the payroll deduction starts. No rebates are offered for any premiums already paid, and once a person receives an exemption, they are not able to opt back into the state program, even if they change jobs.

A spokeswoman for Gov. Jay Inslee said the office had not yet seen the lawsuit. Officials at the Employment Security Department and the Department of Social and Health Services, also named in the lawsuit, did not immediately respond to emails seeking comment.

According to AARP of Washington, 70% of residents 65 and older will require some type of assistance to live independently.

To be eligible for the state benefits, workers will have had to have paid the premium working at least 500 hours per year for three of the previous six years in which they're seeking the benefit or for a total of 10 years, with at least five of those paid without interruption.

The benefit is not portable, so people who pay into the program but later move out of state will not be able to access it, and it only covers the taxpayer, not a spouse or dependent. The benefit also isn't available to those who work in Washington and will pay the deduction but live in neighboring states, like Oregon.

One of the named plaintiffs, Melissa Johnston, lives in Eagle Point, and works in Vancouver, Washington, and said in a written statement that she has no plan to retire in Washington.

"And yet the state is requiring that I buy a long-term care insurance product that can only be used if I retire in Washington—it just doesn't make any sense," she wrote.

	<p>Among the arguments made by the suit is that the WA Cares Fund violates a federal law that forbids the state from passing any law that requires employees to participate in a plan that provides sickness or medical benefits. It also says that the disparate treatment of people paying the tax but not receiving benefits if they are not a Washington resident violates the Equal Protection and the Privileges and Immunities clauses of the U.S. Constitution.</p> <p>Additionally, the fact that people who are within 10 years of retirement will pay into the fund but not receive benefits is a violation of the Older Workers Benefit Protection Act, the suit contends.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Cop26: on track disastrous heating levels</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/09/cop26-sets-course-for-disastrous-heating-of-more-than-24c-says-key-report">https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/09/cop26-sets-course-for-disastrous-heating-of-more-than-24c-says-key-report</a>
GIST	<p>The world is on track for disastrous levels of global heating far in excess of the limits in the Paris climate agreement, despite a flurry of carbon-cutting pledges from governments at the UN <a href="#">Cop26</a> summit.</p> <p>Temperature rises will top 2.4C by the end of this century, based on the short-term goals countries have set out, according to research published in <a href="#">Glasgow</a> on Tuesday.</p> <p>That would far exceed the 2C upper limit the Paris accord said the world needed to stay “well below”, and the much safer 1.5C limit aimed for at the Cop26 talks.</p> <p>At that level, widespread extreme weather – sea-level rises, drought, floods, heatwaves and fiercer storms – would cause devastation across the globe.</p> <p>The estimate stands in sharp contrast to optimistic forecasts published last week that suggested heating could be held to 1.9C or 1.8C, thanks to commitments announced at the talks, <a href="#">now in their second week</a> and scheduled to end this weekend.</p> <p>Those estimates were based on long-term goals set out by countries including India, the world’s third-biggest emitter, which is aiming for net zero emissions by 2070.</p> <p>By contrast, the sobering assessment of a rise of 2.4C from Climate Action Tracker (CAT), the world’s most respected climate analysis coalition, was based on countries’ short-term goals for the next decade.</p> <p>Bill Hare, the chief executive of Climate Analytics, one of the organisations behind CAT, told the Guardian: “We are concerned that some countries are trying to portray [Cop26] as if the 1.5C limit is nearly in the bag. But it’s not, it’s very far from it, and they are downplaying the need to get short-term targets for 2030 in line with 1.5C.”</p> <p>Emissions will be twice as high in 2030 as they need to be to stay within 1.5C, based on promises made in Glasgow, CAT found. <a href="#">Scientists have warned</a> that beyond 1.5C, some of the damage to the Earth’s climate will become irreversible.</p> <p>The analysts also found a chasm between what countries have said they will do on greenhouse gas emissions and their plans in reality. If current policies and measures are taken into account, rather than just goals, heating would rise to 2.7C, based on the CAT analysis.</p> <p>The findings should serve as a “reality check” to the talks, said Niklas Höhne, one of the authors. “Countries’ long-term intentions are good, but their short-term implementation is inadequate,” he told the Guardian.</p> <p>The 197 parties to the 2015 Paris agreement were asked to come to Glasgow with two aims: a long-term goal of reaching global net zero emissions around mid-century; and shorter-term national plans, known as <a href="#">nationally determined contributions (NDCs)</a>, pegging emissions reductions to 2030. Scientists say</p>

greenhouse gas emissions must fall by about 45% this decade for global temperatures to stay within 1.5C of pre-industrial levels.

Countries responsible for about 90% of global emissions have signed up to net zero goals, mostly by around 2050 for developed countries, rising to 2060 for China and 2070 for India, but the NDCs for actions in the next decade do not match up. The climate responds to the cumulative carbon in the atmosphere, so if emissions are high enough in the next two decades the world could surpass the 1.5C limit even if carbon reaches net zero later.

“It’s great that countries have long-term net zero targets, but they need to close the gap with short-term measures,” said Hare.

The first week of the Cop26 talks was dominated by a [rush of announcements](#), including commitments on preserving forests, private sector finance for clean energy, and countries phasing out coal. Some of these quickly started to unravel as countries appeared to renege or clarify some of their commitments.

At the start of the second week of the fortnight-long talks, sharp rifts are appearing between countries that want tougher action, specifically to [force countries to revise their NDCs annually if they are not in line with 1.5C](#), and others wanting to stick to the Paris timetable of five-yearly revisions. There are also disputes about how countries should monitor emissions, and over climate finance for poor countries.

Hare noted there was no contradiction among the varying assessments, published last week by Melbourne University and the International Energy Agency, as they came to similar conclusions based on long-term goals. CAT also found in its “optimistic scenario” that if all targets countries had promised were fully met, temperatures would rise by 1.8C.

The UN environment programme updated its analysis of the “emissions gap” between the cuts needed to stay within 1.5C and those offered by governments. Unep found that with the recently announced pledges by China, Saudi Arabia and others, temperatures were likely to rise by between 1.9C and 2.1C, but like the IEA and Melbourne estimates, that depended on long-term pledges being fully implemented.

Hare said many of the long-term goals countries had set out lacked credibility. He pointed to Brazil, Australia and Russia. “We are concerned that there is not a seriousness of purpose at Cop26. It’s very hypothetical, getting to net zero in 2050,” he said.

Höhne said countries must agree to revise their NDCs every year if they were found insufficient, adding: “If we came back every five years that would be a very bad choice. If countries agree to come back every year, they would have a chance of closing the gap.”

Jennifer Morgan, the executive director of Greenpeace International, said: “This new calculation is like a telescope trained on an asteroid heading for Earth. It’s a devastating report. We have until the weekend to turn this thing around. That means countries agreeing how they’re going to come back next year and every year after that until the gap to 1.5C is closed. The ministers shouldn’t leave this city until they’ve nailed that.”

A Cop26 spokesperson said: “We know that the window to keep 1.5C alive is closing but the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is clear that it is still achievable. As today’s reports make clear, we’ve seen genuine progress in the first week of Cop26, but we have a lot more to do.”

Labour’s Ed Miliband, the shadow business secretary, said: “The test of Cop26 has always been what concrete commitments it would deliver by 2030, the decisive decade to keep 1.5C alive. This report is an important reality check on the government’s attempt to greenwash Glasgow.”

Green party co-leader Adrian Ramsay said: “Today was the day the sugar coating fell off the Cop26 talks to reveal the bitter pill that world leaders are going to force us to swallow if they don’t take much stronger action. This report shows that action in the next 10 years is vital. Long term targets, promises and non-



	existent technofixes, with no actual policies to get us there, are worth nothing. It shows that most global leaders have been asleep at the wheel. This is their wake-up call.”
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HEADLINE	<b>11/10 WaterAid: climate talks ignore water crisis</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/nov/10/global-water-crisis-ignored-cop26-climate-talks-wateraid">https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/nov/10/global-water-crisis-ignored-cop26-climate-talks-wateraid</a>
GIST	<p>A global water crisis is being ignored at <a href="#">Cop26</a> to the detriment of billions of people’s lives, according to the charity WaterAid.</p> <p>Water had not had “nearly enough” attention at the climate conference in Glasgow, with urgent action needed, said Tim Wainwright, chief executive of WaterAid.</p> <p>“The way that climate change affects human beings is almost entirely through water, either too much or too little,” he said. “So why aren’t we talking about water all the time?”</p> <p>“We need the kind of action on water that we have already happening on the energy transition,” he said.</p> <p>“I think this is the first Cop where people are beginning to sit up and take notice. But it needs more than taking note. It needs a lot of action and it’s urgent,” he said.</p> <p>A <a href="#">2016 study</a> found two-thirds of the global population, four billion people, <a href="#">faced water shortages</a>, and many were at increased risk of floods and droughts brought on by the climate crisis.</p> <p>“The climate crisis is a water crisis at its core,” he said. Rainfall patterns have changed in many parts of the world; “more intense and more frequent floods pollute water sources and destroy crops or homes, while longer and more frequent droughts dry up the springs many people need to survive.”</p> <p>Wainwright said very little action was being taken to help affected communities. A WaterAid analysis in 2020 found that <a href="#">water received less than 3% of climate finance overall</a>.</p> <p>Rising sea levels were introducing salt into water sources in places, and drought was pushing water deep underground in others, he said, forcing people, mostly women, to spend longer and walk further in search of water.</p> <p>“Water is fundamental to life,” said Wainwright. “It underlies your health, your ability to have an education.”</p> <p>He pointed out that it was the poorest people in countries that had contributed the least to the climate crisis who were suffering the most and said investment in managing water supply should be focused in these areas.</p> <p>The overwhelming focus of talks on addressing the climate crisis had been on trying to slow it down, he said, at the expense of highlighting the current impact on some of the most climate-stressed parts of the world.</p> <p>“We need a revolution that takes us to zero carbon and we need a revolution that takes us to adapting the world to cope with the climate change that is irreversible,” he said.</p> <p>As part of efforts to tackle the problem, a coalition of governments, businesses, banks and non-governmental organisations pledged their support on Friday for a water and climate crisis fund that aims to <a href="#">bring clean water to 50 million people in Africa and Asia by 2030</a>.</p>

	Unless action was taken, the future would not be “not worth thinking about”, Wainwright added. “It’s calamitous. [A lack of access to water] is already killing people ... It’s unthinkable not to do something about this. The world has to rise to this challenge.”
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 N. Calif. dangerous ‘fire weather’ days rise</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/09/northern-california-wildfires-fire-weather-climate">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/09/northern-california-wildfires-fire-weather-climate</a>
GIST	<p>On late summer and autumn days, when the hot, howling winds sting the skin and chap the lips, Holly Fisher starts to feel a bit unsettled. So do many of her neighbors in the town of Paradise, a name that evokes bitter irony in northern <a href="#">California</a>.</p> <p>“It feels eerie,” she said. Three years ago, this arid, blustery weather portended the Camp fire. It consumed the town, killed more than 80 people, and burned down Fisher’s home. As the region reeled in the aftermath, the same potent convergence of weather conditions – known as “fire weather” – helped fuel the North Complex fire in 2019, and the Caldor and Dixie fires this year.</p> <p>Across the Sierra Nevada foothills, fire weather is increasingly becoming a distressing reality of life. Over the last half-century, global heating has dramatically increased the number of annual fire-weather days in the region, a <a href="#">Climate Central analysis</a> of federal weather station data shows.</p> <p>The Climate Central research reveals that the number of annual fire-weather days in what the National Oceanic &amp; Atmospheric Administration (Noaa) defines as the Sacramento Drainage climate division climbed from an average of seven days in the early 1970s to 22 in 2020. This year there were 25.</p> <p>The number of fire weather days has jumped from seven in the early 1970s to 25 in 2021.</p> <p>Analysis of weather station and fire data also indicates that after the Dixie fire erupted in mid-July this year, nine of the ten days in which it grew the most explosively were characterized by fire weather conditions. The blaze tore through 1m acres of forest and razed much of the city of Greenville.</p> <p>The new analysis found that a similar trend is bearing out across much of the US west. From the Pacific coast to the Great Plains, the number of fire-weather days is increasing. In some regions, fire weather has come to characterize nearly a quarter of the year.</p> <p>The findings are consistent with a growing body of research suggesting that California is entering an unprecedented new era of fire. Climate scientists have <a href="#">found</a> that in parts of the state, fall fire-weather days are expected to double by the end of the century. California’s fire season, which has historically peaked in the late summer and autumn, <a href="#">has been expanding</a>.</p> <p>“Stringing together many extreme fire-weather days in a row allows fire sizes to quickly escalate,” said John Abatzoglou, a climate and fire scientist at the University of California, Merced, who advised the Climate Central analysis and co-authored the research regarding fall fire weather.</p> <p>“We used to have a lot more regional fire hotspots and now those hotspots are growing. It’s a contagion and that is certainly compromising our ability to manage fire,” said Abatzoglou, adding that the changes are creating “synchronous” fire risks across the region– and the world – making it more difficult for governments and agencies to backstop one another with firefighters and equipment.</p> <p>On days with fire weather, a small spark could ignite <a href="#">a megafire</a> in a landscape that has been primed to burn by decades of prolonged drought.</p> <p>The combination of rising temperatures and low humidity also sucks moisture out of the soil, further allowing flames to zip across forests and towns, uninhibited by moisture.</p>

“Everything is so dry that as soon as you blow one of those embers out of the existing fire perimeter, things just catch like that,” said Karen McKinnon, a scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles, who studies climate breakdown and destructive weather.

Global heating and build-up of flammable vegetation have contributed to the increase in wildfires.

McKinnon’s research has examined the role of climate change in driving dryer conditions that are leading to the increase in the recent fire weather, but she pointed out that “it’s not just related to climate”.

In northern California, fires like the Dixie fire have been further fueled by massive build-ups of vegetation – which has accumulated on the landscape during a century of aggressive fire suppression.

“I’m always feeling like a sitting duck,” said Trina Cunningham, the executive director of the Maidu Summit Consortium, who saw a tribal health center, the homes of several members, and a 2,325-acre expanse of culturally important land burn up in the Dixie fire. “The velocity of the fire was just mind-boggling,” said Cunningham. “I couldn’t even comprehend it.”

Her two sons, who work for local fire crews, narrowly escaped the blaze as it bore down on the town of Greenville and surrounding areas where many Maidu tribal members lived. As she watched the wind pick up, her eldest reported that he was safe – but the crew’s truck and equipment were destroyed.

As drought and fire weather simultaneously overtake regions across California and the west, fire crews have been strained and short-staffed.

By then, Cunningham had begun frantically making calls, appealing to local fire chiefs and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to send more firefighters to the region. “I kept asking – we need help, we need support,” she said. Eventually, a small crew did arrive – but thousands of acres had already burned.

“It’s been really frustrating to have to sit there and watch year after year of neglect take its toll,” she said. “We need to start tending to our landscape as we tend to our gardens.”

For Cunningham, the comment is more than metaphor. For centuries before European colonization, California Indians kept forest fuel loads under control by using what foresters now call “prescribed burns”. Today many critics say the practice is underutilized. To reduce the fire risks wrought by the increase in fire weather, experts have for years been calling on western states and the federal government to radically boost the use of prescribed fire to clear would-be fuel from forests.

With extreme fire weather in the mix, firefighters can no longer expect cooler, more humid night conditions to help them tamp down big blazes. As drought and fire weather simultaneously overtake regions across California and the west, fire crews have been strained and short-staffed.

“A lot of us here had come to dread summers, because we know that there’s always a potential for a crazy fire season,” Cunningham said. In the aftermath, “there’s been so much fear, anger, trauma – and just sheer exhaustion”.

Californians have had to cope with a seemingly nonstop cycle of disasters in recent years. But the expanding season and growing intensity of wildfires creates a new level of anxiety, according to David Baron, a neuropsychiatrist at the Western University of Health Sciences in Southern California.

“In California you learn, ‘Yeah, earthquakes can come, the big one might come,’ but you almost tend to deny it to some degree,” said Baron. “Fire is a different story because every fire season they’re getting worse and worse.”

Climate Central’s analysis shows that nearly the entire state appears to have been affected by more frequent fire weather, though no data is available for a narrow band of the state’s north-eastern corner.

	<p>Other states are also seeing stark changes. In parts of New Mexico, Texas, Oregon and Washington, fire weather is at least twice as prevalent as it was 50 years ago.</p> <p>To combat the increase in fire weather, there's scientific consensus that the global economy must be flipped from reliance on polluting fossil fuels to 21st-century technologies. For example, local electrical grids powered by solar and wind energy, augmented by battery storage, produce negligible carbon pollution, and they reduce threats from long-distance transmission lines, which have sparked some of California's deadliest and most destructive fires.</p> <p>"I don't think that these big wildfires are going to stop until something really gives," said Fisher. Paradise is unlikely to burn again in the near future – there's not much left to burn. "But I worry for other communities, about who's going to be next."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 DOJ investigates Alabama sewage failures</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/09/doj-investigate-alabama-sewage-failures-possible-discrimination">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/09/doj-investigate-alabama-sewage-failures-possible-discrimination</a>
GIST	<p>Four years after a shocking discovery revealed hookworm in the US's rural south, the justice department has announced it will investigate sanitation failures in Lowndes county, a majority Black county in <a href="#">Alabama</a>.</p> <p>"Sanitation is a basic human need," said Kristen Clarke, assistant attorney general for the justice department's civil rights division, on Tuesday. "Bold action is needed to ensure that no one in this country is unjustifiably subjected to illness or harm resulting from inadequate access to safe sewage services."</p> <p>The crux of the federal investigation is whether access to sanitation systems in Alabama's Lowndes county is based on race. The DoJ will examine whether the state and county health departments violated the civil rights of Black residents in Lowndes county, by blocking their access to adequate sanitation systems, thereby increasing their risk of a host of health problems such as parasitic infections.</p> <p>"We will conduct a fair and thorough investigation of these environmental justice concerns and their impact on the health, life and safety of people across Lowndes county, Alabama," said Clarke.</p> <p>A 2017 study found that hookworm, an intestinal parasite which was once widespread in North America but had not been detected in the US since the 1980s, was thriving in Lowndes county. The study was conducted by researchers from the Baylor College of Medicine, working together with the non-profit Alabama Center for Rural Enterprise (now called the Center for Rural Enterprise and Environmental Justice).</p> <p>Located between Selma and Montgomery, Lowndes county is one of the poorest in the US. The median household income is roughly \$30,000 and <a href="#">70%</a> of the population is African American. Most of the homes are not connected to the city-run sewage systems, leaving residents to install private septic tanks that can cost up to <a href="#">\$15,000</a>. With more intense rainfall, the septic systems are prone to overflow and malfunction, with the cost of upkeep falling on residents.</p> <p>"For generations, many residents have had little choice but to resort to the practice of straight piping," Clarke said, referring to the practice of relying on pipes and ditches to guide sewage away from the home, into the open areas immediately surrounding it. Often, it means that households live with raw sewage in their backyard.</p> <p>The clay-like soil in this region is unsuitable for absorption and drainage. During heavy rain and floods, the disease-containing fecal waste and other raw sewage remains on the surface of the soil or back up into people's sinks, toilets and bathtubs.</p>

	<p>Residents of Lowndes have been raising the alarm for <a href="#">years</a>, prompting the United Nations special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights to criticize the dire lack of adequate sewerage in 2017.</p> <p>“The justice department is committed to fully enforcing our federal civil rights laws to address the legacy of environmental injustice that we face across the country,” Clarke said. “That commitment includes the failure to provide basic wastewater infrastructure, in historically marginalized and overburdened communities of color.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/10 China's factory inflation grows record pace</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-factory-inflation-grows-at-record-pace-on-soaring-energy-prices-11636523316?mod=hp_listc_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-factory-inflation-grows-at-record-pace-on-soaring-energy-prices-11636523316?mod=hp_listc_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>HONG KONG—China's factory-gate prices surged at a record pace in October due to higher energy costs, adding to anxieties that global inflation will persist while constraining Beijing's ability to stimulate the nation's economy.</p> <p>China's producer-price index rose by a record 13.5% in October from a year earlier, accelerating from a 10.7% increase in September, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.</p> <p>The reading exceeded the 12.5% median forecast from economists polled by The Wall Street Journal and is the highest level since 1996, when Chinese officials began releasing the data.</p> <p>Consumer inflation in the world's second-largest economy rose by 1.5% last month from a year earlier, up from 0.7% in September, though it remained below the official target of around 3% for this year.</p> <p>In October, extreme weather and shortages of some goods lifted China's consumer inflation, said Dong Lijuan, a senior statistician with the National Bureau of Statistics. Gains in producer inflation widened partly due to a relatively tight supply of energy and raw materials, she said.</p> <p>Persistently high factory-gate prices in China will likely exacerbate inflationary anxiety in the U.S. and other western economies while causing limited pain for China's own consumers, in large part because a recovery in domestic demand has fallen short of expectations, economists say.</p> <p>Chinese authorities have ordered coal miners to operate at full capacity and rolled back restrictions on imports as energy costs surge. Coal prices have begun to pull back after output reached a multiyear high last week.</p> <p>Many economists said they expect China's industrial inflation will edge lower in the coming months as Beijing's interventions cut coal prices more over time. In addition, they say consumer demand in the West for Chinese goods is likely to pull back further.</p> <p>Still, elevated commodity prices in the near term will limit Beijing's options for stimulating an economy bruised by a rapidly cooling real-estate sector, ongoing power shortages and renewed outbreaks of Covid-19 cases.</p> <p>Higher coal and metal prices could deter local authorities from buying steel and other commodities needed for infrastructure construction, a key driver of growth that China often relies on to stave off slowdowns.</p> <p>As a result, China's growth could slow to a 3.6% year-over-year expansion in the fourth quarter, down from 4.9% in the third quarter, according to a forecast from Zhaopeng Xing, chief China strategist at ANZ.</p> <p>“Such high commodity prices will significantly curb China's ability to expand its fiscal policy,” Mr. Xing said. The country's central bank is unlikely to ease monetary policy given plans unveiled by the Federal Reserve last week to wind down American pandemic-era stimulus measures, he said.</p>

	<p>Meanwhile, China's consumer-price index rose at a faster pace in October in part due to logistical bottlenecks that pushed up food and fuel prices. Fresh vegetable prices surged by 16.6% in October compared with the previous month, offsetting subdued pork prices.</p> <p>Heavy downpours flooded some major vegetable-growing provinces in northern and central China over the past few weeks and caused an increase in prices for leafy green vegetables. But economists predict higher vegetable prices won't have a lasting impact on consumer inflation, as slow recovery in household income as well as Covid-19 outbreaks will continue to dampen demand.</p> <p>Dan Wang, chief China economist at Hang Seng Bank, last month lowered her forecast for China's consumer inflation to 1.3% by year-end, down from previous forecast of 1.5%, as growth of per capita income and spending among Chinese families hovered below pre-pandemic levels during the first nine months of the year.</p> <p>"China won't have an inflation problem because supply of goods has consistently exceeded actual demand," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Seattle schools cancel Friday classes</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3227897/seattle-school-cancels-classes-friday-staff-on-leave/">https://mynorthwest.com/3227897/seattle-school-cancels-classes-friday-staff-on-leave/</a>
GIST	<p>Seattle Public Schools <a href="#">will be cancelling all classes</a> on Friday, citing issues with low staffing.</p> <p>SPS made the announcement in an email sent out to families on Tuesday, stating that it was "aware of an unusually large number of SPS staff taking leave on Friday," and that it does "not believe we have adequate personnel to open schools with the necessary environment for high-quality learning." School remains canceled on Thursday for Veterans Day as well.</p> <p>In total, it's estimated that 600 teachers put in a request for substitute for that day by late last week, with additional requests arriving in the last couple days.</p> <p>The district further clarified the decision in a statement to MyNorthwest, noting that the "number of leave requests on a Friday after a federal holiday is indicative of the fatigue our staff and students are experiencing in these months of the return to the classroom."</p> <p>"The four-day weekend may offer physical, mental, and emotional restoration," SPS spokesperson Tim Robinson said.</p> <p>The district plans to add the missed day onto the end of the 2021-2022 school calendar to hit the requisite number of educational hours for students.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 School board members dark new reality</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/death-threats-online-abuse-police-protection-school-board-members-face-dark-new-reality/2021/11/09/db007706-37fe-11ec-9bc4-86107e7b0ab1_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/death-threats-online-abuse-police-protection-school-board-members-face-dark-new-reality/2021/11/09/db007706-37fe-11ec-9bc4-86107e7b0ab1_story.html</a>
GIST	<p>It was when the police car pulled away from her house, some time after midnight on a Thursday in late October, that Beth Barts hit her breaking point.</p> <p>The school board member in Loudoun County, Va., had been fielding abusive, profane and threatening emails, Facebook messages and phone calls for eight months. She was also facing a recall campaign from mostly conservative parents irate over her support for pandemic safety measures, as well as her membership in a pro-equity parent group on Facebook. And she had been censured by other members of the school board in part for her outspokenness, which they said veered into rudeness, on social media.</p> <p>The harassment of Barts, a 50-year-old stay-at-home mother and former librarian who used to lead a Girl Scouts troop, is part of a wave of anger against elected and appointed school officials, including</p>



superintendents, that is cresting nationwide. Parents upset over things including mask mandates in schools, as well as officials' efforts to introduce more diverse curriculums and bias trainings for teachers, have taken over school board meetings, shouting abuse, making threats and demanding resignations.

In early October, Attorney General Merrick Garland [directed federal authorities](#) to collaborate with state and local law enforcement to combat "harassment, intimidation, and threats of violence against school administrators." He was responding to a request from the National School Boards Association, which represents school board members across the country and which in late September [sent a letter to President Biden](#) asking for assistance handling what the association called "a form of domestic terrorism."

Republican lawmakers — and many parents — took offense to Garland's directive, complaining that the federal government and the National School Boards Association are demonizing well-meaning mothers and fathers who just want what's best for their children.

Amid the political blowback, the association backtracked, writing in [an Oct. 22 message to members](#) that "we regret and apologize for the letter." Days later, Garland was forced to defend his memo in a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, refusing Republican lawmakers' demands that he rescind it — and weathering Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton's declaration that he should "resign in disgrace."

Garland said parents have the right to share their concerns with school boards, but that he worries the meetings will splinter into violence.

The ongoing harassment of school board members runs the gamut: In Illinois, a man [was arrested for striking a school official](#) at a September board meeting. In Hilton, N.Y., [three people were arrested at a school board meeting last month](#) — one for allegedly refusing to put on a mask, two for allegedly refusing to leave after the school board president suspended the meeting because of attendees' unruly behavior.

And in Pennsylvania, a Republican candidate for Northampton County executive [said at an August rally that he would bring "20 strong men"](#) to the next school board meeting so they could "replace [board members] with nine parents and we're going to vote down the mask mandates . . . this is how you get stuff done." Steve Lynch, who was in D.C. at the time of the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, denied he meant to threaten board members. He ultimately lost his election.

The hottest conflict over education has arguably come in Loudoun, a majority White, politically divided and wealthy suburb just outside D.C. Intense coverage from conservative media has converted Loudoun into the face of the nation's culture wars. Board meetings in the district of roughly 81,000 students regularly stretch late into the night because more than 100 parents show up, some eager to scream insults at the board, some to pray for their salvation.

Despite the threats and anger, Barts said, she never felt unsafe in her own home. Not after a quarter-century of living in Leesburg, the quiet town she knows so well, the place where she has already raised one child and is midway through raising the second, a girl.

But it was thoughts of her youngest daughter that gripped Barts on a Thursday last month, as she sat on the couch trying to distract herself with an episode of "Ted Lasso." The police were outside her house, she said, because the Loudoun County Public Schools safety and security team had asked the county sheriff's office to send patrols to the homes of every school board member.

The embattled board was confronting yet another firestorm of controversy after revelations that the school district had transferred a teenager accused of sexual assault to a second high school within the system, where the teen allegedly committed a second assault. Some conservative parents and pundits were tying the sexual assault allegations to the district's recent adoption of a policy that allowed transgender students to use bathrooms matching their gender identities — a policy Barts had supported.

Earlier that evening, Barts's daughter had complained that the police officer's flashing blue lights were making it impossible to sleep. Barts's husband walked outside and asked the officer if he could turn off his



lights. The policeman replied that he couldn't: "That way," Barts's husband remembered him saying, "people are aware we're here."

Eventually, Barts's husband and daughter fell asleep. But she stayed up, unable to relax. Her mind strayed to snatches of the messages she'd been receiving for months: "You f---ing disgusting piece of s---." "YOU ARE A TRAITOR TO THE USA!" "A public hanging is in order . . . Should only take a few seconds."

She realized the policeman had gone when the blue light that edged her living room shut off. Then she had a second realization: She was completely, utterly alone.

"I had a panic attack," Barts said, "because I realized: All it would take is one person believing it was their mission to do something about us all — and in five minutes, maybe even two minutes, we could be gone."

"And my baby was sleeping upstairs," Barts added. "And then I couldn't do it anymore."

Barts drafted a letter of resignation, ran it by a few close friends once they woke up around 7 a.m. and submitted it to the clerk of the school board that afternoon. She also posted it to Facebook with the title: "Taking my life back."

'When did asking kids to wear a mask become child abuse?'

On a balmy evening in early October, about a dozen people gathered before a red-roofed house in a sleepy Sarasota County, Fla., neighborhood.

A girl in a red dress waved an American flag. A man paced back and forth with a "Don't Tread On Me" flag hoisted over one shoulder, shouting, "No vaccines! No masks!" Other adults pulled out megaphones.

"We see you in there, Shirley," called a man in a black baseball cap, according to a video shared on Twitter. "We know the next step is from masks to vaccines. This will not happen. This is the line we will die on."

They were standing outside the home of Shirley Brown, the 69-year-old chair of the Sarasota County Schools board. Midway through cooking dinner when the protesters arrived, Brown within minutes phoned the police for help. By that point, she had already received a slew of emails labeling her a tyrant and a child abuser for her support of mask-wearing in schools. A parent group had shared her home address and phone number online.

"I mean," said Brown, who plans to retire when her term expires next year, "when did asking kids to wear a mask become child abuse?"

In most places, the path to parental outrage has been the same. Mothers and fathers began showing up to board meetings in spring and summer of 2020, upset over school closures because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Beverly Anderson, a long-serving board member for Virginia Beach City Public Schools, said she first noticed an uptick in discontent when she began receiving 50 to 60 emails a day following her school system's decision to close because of the pandemic in March 2020. Parents started showing up to complain at board meetings soon afterward, and the tone quickly turned far nastier than anything Anderson had seen in almost a decade serving on the school board.

"Covid changed things," Anderson said, "because people didn't understand why we had to close schools."

Even after many schools reopened last fall, parents across the United States kept attending board meetings to share their concerns over safety measures, including social distancing, and to push for more days of in-person teaching. Some were upset that teachers were among the first in line for vaccines, given a portion

of educators were continuing to teach remotely. And, taking the opposite view, some speakers came to demand more safety precautions.

By the fall of the 2021-2022 academic year, with the vast majority of school districts reopened for five days a week of almost-normal in-person learning, the arguments shifted to center on curricular and cultural issues. Some parents nationwide — usually White, conservative parents — have become alarmed over what they argue is the indoctrination of their children with critical race theory, a college-level academic framework that examines systemic racism in America.

The theory is not taught at the K-12 level, but schools across the country have embarked on racial justice initiatives — including adopting more diverse hiring practices and adding books by Black authors to curriculums — that parents argue amount to the embrace of critical race theory. How schools treat transgender students has also emerged as a hot-button issue.

Nowadays, meetings in Anderson's small Virginia Beach district of 65,000 regularly last until 1 or 2 a.m., she said. Parents sign up in scores for public comment. People hold rallies in the parking lot beforehand, and security personnel or police have begun escorting Anderson and her colleagues to their cars at night's end.

At one meeting, Anderson said, an attendee gave the board the middle finger and began shouting obscenities, causing the board to ask police to escort her from the building — which spurred accusations that the board had silenced the speaker. At another meeting, after students spoke in defense of books including Toni Morrison's "Beloved," parents accused the board of paying the students, Anderson said. One woman vowed an investigation.

"There is a faction of the community [that] is just discontented with anything public-school-wise," Anderson said. "They look for issues that are able to divide us, anything they can come up with that is negative, because they are just so angry."

Anderson, 70, who spent 36 years as a classroom teacher, ran for school board in 2012 because she wanted the district to start offering full-day kindergarten rather than half-day. She accomplished that goal quickly, but ran for the board again in 2016 and in 2020 because she loves being a board member. It allows her to tour schools and visit classrooms, she said, and to advocate for teachers and students.

But after one especially raucous recent meeting, Anderson drove home to find a massive screw stuck in her car tire. Her husband is convinced an angry parent placed it there. Ever since, he has insisted Anderson ask the police who attend board meetings to walk around her vehicle checking for damage before she climbs in.

Anderson is facing a recall campaign led by parents upset with her votes in favor of pandemic safety measures. She is considering retiring after her term runs out.

Another board member weighing whether to leave her job is Blanca Gonzalez-Parker, a mother of three in Guilderland, N.Y. Gonzalez-Parker, who is 43 and Latina, is one of the only people of color serving on the board of Guilderland Central schools, a district of about 5,000 near Albany.

She ran for the board last year because she has a background in public health and thought she could help the school district protect children and teachers amid the pandemic. Initially, things went okay. Then in August, the board voted to adopt a mask mandate, a measure Gonzalez-Parker supported.

The emails started coming soon after. People messaged her threatening to kick her off the board or calling her scum, a "stupid b----" and a Marxist, she said. Others began harassing her children, sending texts to the eighth-grader asserting that her mother was crazy and a liar, and that it was her mother's fault children have to wear masks.

On a couple recent nights, police stayed outside Gonzalez-Parker's house as a precaution. Scared by the officers and the flashing lights, her children began begging her to quit. She remembers them asking through tears, "Why don't you love us more?" and "Why aren't we more important than this stupid volunteer job?"

Gonzalez-Parker hears their questions repeating in her head almost all the time. Part of her wants to quit. Part of her feels an obligation to the students in Guilderland.

"I really want to keep everyone safe, including the children of the people who harass us," she said. "But I'm afraid for my family, and I have to decide what's more important."

### **A boost in candidates — and spending**

Not every school district is seeing a spike in violence and threats. In many places, board members are meeting to vote on items such as elementary-school utility easements much as they have always done, with little debate, fanfare or outside interest.

One such place is Alexandria City Public Schools, a Northern Virginia district of about 16,000 that sits close by Loudoun County but is more diverse and solidly blue. In Alexandria, mask and vaccine mandates have drawn almost no opposition. There is no organized parent group waging war against critical race theory. And the public comment portions of board meetings have generally remained short and decorous.

The setup apparently proved enticing, as a crowded field of 15 candidates — including several incumbents — competed for the nine school board seats up for reelection in Alexandria this fall.

But school boards in districts beset by controversy also saw heightened interest, especially from conservatives. Right-leaning advocacy groups and political action committees dumped large sums into school board races this fall — as did some traditionally left-leaning groups such as teachers unions. FreedomWorks, a conservative nonprofit that adopted deceptive advertising in service of President Donald Trump's reelection campaign, this year developed a six-week program that teaches parents how to run for the school board so they can combat "mask mandates, lockdowns, or critical race theory," according to the group's website.

In Ohio, the number of school board candidates rose by 50 percent this fall compared with four years ago, WOSU 89.7 NPR News reported — and many campaigned on a promise of eradicating critical race theory. In Colorado, spending on school board races across the state skyrocketed to \$1.9 million, the Colorado Sun reported, with most of it coming from teachers unions or individual donors — including one man who gave \$30,000 each to four Douglas County candidates favored by the Republican Party. In Denver alone, a teachers union gave more than \$157,000 to four school board candidates, according to Chalkbeat Colorado.

And in Pennsylvania, self-described "hardcore Republican" Paul Martino, father to a seventh-grader and fifth-grader in the Central Bucks school system, said he donated \$500,000 to school board races around the state in hopes of bolstering a bipartisan slate of candidates interested in keeping schools open. One of the recipients of that money was Jessie Bradica, a 43-year-old stay-at-home mother of three in the North Penn School District, just outside Philadelphia.

Bradica decided to run in February when she learned the local Republican Party was asking for volunteers, she said. She campaigned to fully reopen schools, which were then open part time, and she hoped to bring balance to a school board she said was 100 percent liberal.

Bradica declined to share who she voted for in the 2016 or 2020 presidential elections. But she said that she holds moderately conservative views, and that she was in D.C. at the time of the Jan. 6 Capitol riot — which became an issue in her school board campaign — although she said she did not go near the U.S. Capitol building or participate in any violence.

She knows board meetings in North Penn have become volatile of late — it was like watching “the division in our community . . . on full display,” she said — but she believes the vitriol will diminish if she and other conservative or independent candidates win their races and are able to enact more middle-of-the-road policies.

“Here’s the thing,” Bradica said. “When you make 100 percent of a group or side happy, you are going to make the other side or other people 100 percent unhappy.”

Bradica ultimately lost her election. She was in the minority. Martino, the father who donated half a million, said 60 percent of the candidates he sponsored won their school board elections.

And he is still pleased with the results, even in places where his candidates lost, he said.

“Just having the parents show up and say, ‘We’re here, we’re watching what you’re doing,’ ” Martino said, “that was also a win.”

### **'They're not going to stop'**

In Loudoun County, Beth Barts decided to watch a live stream of the first school board meeting following her resignation.

Sitting before her computer on Oct. 26, she watched as angry parents spoke for two hours. The last to approach the podium was Ian Prior, a father and former Trump administration official in the Justice Department who founded the parent group, Fight for Schools, that filed the recall petition against Barts and is seeking the recall of four other progressive board members.

“I can’t believe I’m about to say this, but a week-and-a-half ago, a member of this school board . . . did the right thing,” Prior said, referring to Barts’s decision to quit. “And now, you all don’t have your human shield to take the slings and arrows. So the spotlight of accountability turns to you.”

Barts was suddenly cold.

“He’s right,” she recalls thinking. “I’m gone. But they’re not going to stop.”

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HEADLINE	11/09 France mandates booster for 65 and older
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/world/europe/france-macron-covid-restrictions.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=World%20News">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/world/europe/france-macron-covid-restrictions.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=World%20News</a>
GIST	<p>PARIS — Seeking to regain control over his agenda five months before elections, President Emmanuel Macron of France on Tuesday announced the tightening of a key anti-coronavirus measure as infections keep rising across France and the rest of Europe.</p> <p>In a nationally televised speech from the Élysée Palace, Mr. Macron also tried to shift the focus away from the pandemic that has upended his presidency by laying out themes expected to underpin his bid for re-election.</p> <p>“Vaccinate yourself so that you can lead a normal life,” Mr. Macron implored those who had still not gotten a single shot. Addressing the nation for the ninth time since the start of a crisis that has claimed <a href="#">119,000 lives</a> in France, he added, “Being free in a nation like France entails being responsible and showing solidarity. I’m therefore counting on you.”</p> <p>People over the age of 65 will now have to get a booster shot to remain eligible for a vaccine passport needed to gain access to restaurants, museums, long-distance trains and other public places. The new rule takes effect on Dec. 15.</p> <p>France has one of the world’s highest vaccination rates, with <a href="#">69 percent</a> of the country fully vaccinated.</p>

But new cases have been increasing in recent weeks, as have hospital admissions. An average of [40 Covid-related deaths](#) are reported every day in hospitals — a 60 percent increase over the past seven days, though only a tenth of the figure a year ago when no vaccines were available.

France is the latest European country to experience a resurgence in the virus. [Germany](#) suffered record cases this month, and Britain is in the middle of a surge just three months after all restrictions were lifted on what Prime Minister Boris Johnson described as “Freedom Day.”

The [World Health Organization warned](#) last week that Europe was back at the epicenter of the pandemic and that half a million people could die from Covid in the next few months.

Mr. Macron urged the French not to let their guards down. In the past couple of months, as infections had decreased steadily since August, many restaurants in Paris and elsewhere had stopped inspecting customers’ vaccination passports, as they are required to do.

Though billed as an address on the pandemic, the 27-minute speech sounded more often like a campaign declaration. Mr. Macron summarized what he considered his presidency’s accomplishments and listed goals in a potential second term.

“So the third shot was just an excuse to make a campaign speech whose declarations are all eminently debatable,” Marine Le Pen, the leader of the far-right National Rally, said in a [Tweet](#).

The pandemic derailed some of the most ambitious reforms of Mr. Macron’s presidency, including overhauling France’s complex pension system and reining in public spending.

Between March 2020 and August 2021, the French government spent 240 billion euros, or about \$280 billion, to prop up the economy, with massive assistance to companies and individuals.

Since September — with borrowing made easier because of the pandemic — the French government has continued to pour millions into various projects, including the revitalization of the city of Marseille, farming, sports, youth programs, home energy renovations and a one-off 100-euro check to lower-income households to offset rising energy prices.

Rivals in next April’s presidential elections have accused Mr. Macron of hypocrisy in using public money for electoral purposes.

“You now have with Macron, Christmas in September, Christmas in October, Christmas in November,” Xavier Bertrand, a center-right politician, said Monday during a debate of presidential hopefuls from the Republicans party.

Mr. Macron is leading in the polls among voters ahead of the election next April and is expected to make it into the runoff in a two-round contest. He had long been expected to face off against Ms. Le Pen in a rematch of the 2017 elections.

But the emergence and [rapid rise of Eric Zemmour](#), a far-right TV star and writer, has upset the calculus of Mr. Macron, Ms. Le Pen and other presidential contenders. Most polls now show Mr. Zemmour in second place behind the president.

Though he has yet to officially declare his candidacy, Mr. Zemmour has succeeded in focusing the debate so far on the highly explosive issue of immigration.

Mr. Macron, who has also still not declared his bid for re-election, has kept a relatively low profile as his rivals across the political gamut have clashed in recent weeks. His speech Tuesday was seen in the French news media as an effort to move the debate away from immigration onto economic matters.

HEADLINE	11/09 West: Belarus orchestrating migrant crisis
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/world/europe/poland-belarus-border-crisis.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/world/europe/poland-belarus-border-crisis.html</a>
GIST	<p>Poland has massed thousands of troops on its border with Belarus to keep out Middle Eastern migrants who have set up camp there, as Western officials accuse Belarus's leader of intentionally trying to create a new migrant crisis in Europe.</p> <p>The standoff along the razor-wire fence separating the two countries has intensified a long-simmering confrontation between Belarus, a repressive former Soviet republic, and the European Union, which includes Poland.</p> <p>Western officials say that President Aleksandr G. Lukashenko of Belarus is allowing asylum seekers from the Middle East into his country by the thousands and then funneling them westward toward Poland and the E.U., and has escalated that strategy this week. They say he is retaliating against sanctions imposed after his disputed 2020 election victory.</p> <p>The sharp increase in tensions has rattled European officials, with images of desperate migrants evoking the refugee crisis of 2015. The confrontation with Belarus, a close Russian ally, also raises new security concerns.</p> <p>E.U. leaders are scrambling to strike a balance between protecting the bloc's external borders and preventing a worsening humanitarian crisis among the migrants camped along the edge of a forest in freezing weather.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Polish authorities said, at least 3,000 people who hoped to enter the European Union were gathered near the Kuznica border crossing, near the Belarusian city of Grodno. Hundreds could be seen camped just feet away from the border fence in video footage provided by both sides. In response to the growing numbers, Poland increased its forces in the area to more than 17,000 soldiers, border guards and police, Polish officials said.</p> <p>"This is a hybrid action carried out by the Belarusian regime against Poland and the E.U.," said President Andrzej Duda of Poland, describing an operation that he said was orchestrated by Belarusian security forces to bring thousands of migrants into the forest near the border. "These are just aggressive actions that we have to resist."</p> <p>Poland has prevented journalists, aid organizations and E.U. officials from traveling to the border area, making reports from the scene difficult to verify. Polish authorities said eight people have died so far trying to cross the border.</p> <p>Human rights groups, including <a href="#">Amnesty International</a> and <a href="#">the Helsinki Foundation of Human Rights</a>, have accused Poland of illegally pushing migrants who had crossed the border back into Belarusian territory.</p> <p>Poland's government recently passed legislation legalizing pushbacks, which has been criticized by human rights groups and is being analyzed by the European Commission. For years, the nationalist governing party has cast migration from the Middle East as a threat to Polish culture and sovereignty.</p> <p>Still, a show of support for Poland from E.U. countries and top officials suggested that Europe's security concerns were trumping human rights.</p> <p>Jens Stoltenberg, the secretary general of NATO, said he spoke with Mr. Duda and pledged the alliance's "solidarity." Peter Stano, a spokesman for the E.U.'s executive arm, said Mr. Lukashenko was behaving like "a gangster" and that unspecified additional sanctions against Belarus were on their way.</p> <p>But it did not appear that Mr. Lukashenko, an autocrat who has ruled his country since 1994, was prepared to change course. His government denies creating a refugee crisis, but he has hinted for months that he</p>

could do just that. In May, he [warned](#) the West: “We stopped drugs and migrants for you — now you’ll have to eat them and catch them yourselves.”

Until recently, migrants were scattered the length of the border, but now Belarusian authorities are collecting them at the Kuznica crossing, said Anna Alboth of the Minority Rights Group in Poland.

On Tuesday, Belarus’s border service released a video showing a tent camp squeezed into a narrow strip of land just a few yards from a line of Polish security forces in white helmets. The video showed a low-flying helicopter, military vehicles and a water cannon truck on the Polish side, and a thicket of tents and smoky bonfires on the Belarusian side.

“We have not seen any violations of the law by the migrants,” said Ivan Kubrakov, the interior minister of Belarus. “As a hospitable country, we are always ready to welcome everyone.”

A [video posted](#) by the Polish Ministry of Defense on Monday showed a crowd of people trying to break down the razor wire border fence with long sticks.

“There is not enough water and food,” the Belarus border service said in a statement, describing the people in the camp as mainly Kurds. “The situation is complicated by a significant number of pregnant women and infants among the refugees.”

E.U. officials said they were analyzing air traffic to Minsk, the Belarusian capital, as potential evidence that Mr. Lukashenko was effectively orchestrating a flow of migrants toward E.U. countries. The timetable for the Minsk airport, effective Oct. 31, shows at least 47 scheduled flights per week from Middle Eastern locations, compared with no more than 23 flights per week on its previous schedule. The additional flights include a new daily route from Damascus on an Airbus A320 operated by the Syrian airline Cham Wings.

Travel agencies in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where many of the migrants come from, have been offering packages that include visas to Belarus and airfare either through Turkey or the United Arab Emirates for about \$3,000.

Mr. Stano, the E.U. spokesman, said officials were monitoring flights from around two dozen countries that were ferrying migrants into Minsk — including Morocco, Syria, South Africa, Somalia, India, Sri Lanka, Algeria, Libya and Yemen. The European commissioner for home affairs, Ylva Johansson, said the E.U. was stepping up “outreach with partner countries” to prevent migrants from coming to Belarus in the first place.

“Our urgent priority is to turn off the supply coming into Minsk airport,” she said in a tweet.

The E.U.’s standoff with Mr. Lukashenko has been intensifying ever since he crushed street protests against election fraud last year. Mr. Lukashenko claims the West is trying to topple him by supporting the opposition, and has imprisoned thousands of dissidents and journalists, while many others have left the country.

In May, Belarus diverted a RyanAir flight from Greece to Lithuania as it flew through Belarusian airspace, forcing it to land in Minsk, and arrested a passenger, Roman Protasevich, a dissident Belarusian journalist living in exile. European leaders decried the move as an act of piracy, and it provoked a new round of Western sanctions against Belarus.

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia has emerged as Mr. Lukashenko’s most important backer. The two spoke by phone on Tuesday, the Kremlin said, and discussed the situation at the Polish border. Mr. Putin’s foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, blamed the West for stoking the migration crisis and said the E.U. should pay Belarus to help contain it — just as the bloc [sent financial aid to Turkey to do so in 2016](#).

“We see that the Belarusian specialists are working very responsibly,” Dmitri S. Peskov, the Kremlin spokesman, told reporters.



	<p>Polish officials said that in addition to those at the border, more than 10,000 migrants were elsewhere in Belarus, also hoping to get to the E.U. On Monday, Piotr Müller, a Polish government spokesman, said the country's borders were "under attack in an organized manner." A top security official, Maciej Wasik, said a "real battle" had taken place against people trying to enter Poland illegally near Kuznica.</p> <p>The standoff comes at a particularly difficult moment in Poland's relations with the E.U., and in the country's domestic politics. The conservative Polish government's longstanding feud with the European Commission, the bloc's executive arm, over the independence of Poland's judiciary escalated in recent weeks, and the commission has been withholding the payment of the country's \$41 billion share of the E.U. coronavirus fund.</p> <p>At home, the Polish governing party, Law and Justice, has seized on the image of a nation besieged by migrants to parade its nationalist credentials and brand its critics as unpatriotic at a time of national crisis. Both the opposition and nationalist groups that support the government are scheduled to rally in the center of the capital on Thursday, Poland's Independence Day.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 China 'may be committing genocide'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/world/asia/us-holocaust-museum-china-uyghurs-report.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/world/asia/us-holocaust-museum-china-uyghurs-report.html</a>
GIST	<p>The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum said in a report issued on Tuesday that China had escalated its crimes against the Muslim community of Uyghurs in the northwestern region of Xinjiang and that it was "gravely concerned" that the government "may be committing genocide."</p> <p>The report, <a href="#">"To Make Us Slowly Disappear": The Chinese Government's Assault on the Uyghurs</a>, builds on a March 2020 announcement made by the museum that there was "reasonable basis" to believe that the Chinese government "had perpetrated the crimes against humanity of persecution and of imprisonment" against the Uyghurs.</p> <p>Based on compiled evidence, the report issued Tuesday found there was now "reasonable basis" to believe that the crimes include "forced sterilization, sexual violence, enslavement, torture, and forcible transfer."</p> <p>In a statement, Tom Bernstein, chair of the museum's committee on conscience, called on the Chinese government to stop the crimes against the Uyghurs and allow independent international monitors to investigate.</p> <p>"The Chinese government has done its best to keep information about crimes against the Uyghurs from seeing the light of day," he said. "The information that has come out so far, including documentation from courageous Uyghur activists, has been damning."</p> <p>In a statement, Naomi Kikoler, director of the museum's Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, said that the "Chinese government's assault on the Uyghur community" described in the report was "alarming in scale and severity."</p> <p>"The damage inflicted upon Uyghur individuals, families, and their community has left deep physical and emotional scars," she said. "The trauma from these atrocities will harm generations of Uyghurs."</p> <p>The report calls on the Chinese government to "immediately halt the commission of mass atrocity crimes," and lists specific next steps such as ending forced sterilization and forced abortion. But the Chinese government, <a href="#">which has over the years denied such crimes</a>, is unlikely to be fazed by the report or follow through with any demands made of it.</p> <p>The Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the report on Tuesday. But the Chinese government had spoken against such claims as recently as Oct. 21, when more than 40 countries, including the United States, criticized</p>

China's repression of the Uyghurs at a United Nations meeting. China's U.N. ambassador, Zhang Jun, responded by saying that the countries had made "groundless accusations against China."

"No matter how many times repeated, lies are still lies," the ambassador said. "You are using human rights as a pretext for political maneuvering to provoke confrontation. In fact, you are the troublemaker and biggest obstacle to international human rights cooperation."

The museum in its report concedes that "it would be naïve to expect the Chinese government to change course so dramatically without a concerted international effort."

"Having publicly declared that China is committing genocide and crimes against humanity, the United States and like-minded governments must be at the center of the effort to press China to end its atrocities against the Uyghurs," the report said.

Ned Price, a spokesman for the State Department, shared the museum's report on Twitter on Tuesday, saying that it renewed "our call for the People's Republic of China to end its crimes against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang."

The Uyghurs have long expressed resentment for China's control of the Xinjiang region, saying they have been discriminated against, while [one million or more people in internment camps](#) have been detained for a number of acts, including religious practice and violating birth restrictions.

In one example cited in the report, an Uyghur woman recalled being beaten and raped while she was detained in Xinjiang in March 2018. The woman detailed being raped by men who used iron bars and electric batons, and later being raped by three men together.

"I remember it very clearly," the report quotes her as saying. "I can't cry and I can't die ... my soul and heart are dead."

The United States has previously spoken out against China's treatment of the Uyghurs. In the final full day of the Trump administration, then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that China was carrying out genocide in a ["systematic attempt to destroy Uyghurs."](#)

Under the Biden administration, in an [annual report on human rights practices](#) released in March, the United States condemned the Chinese government for what Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said was "genocide against Uyghurs" and crimes of "imprisonment, torture, enforced sterilization, and persecution."

In its announcement in March 2020, the [museum](#) accused the Chinese of conducting forced assimilation of the Uyghurs. While that did not fall under the definition of genocide under the Genocide Convention, the museum said at the time, "Regardless of its legal classification, assimilation threatens the continued existence of Uyghurs' cultural and religious practices."

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HEADLINE	11/09 Canada approves Pfizer booster all adults
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/world/americas/canada-pfizer-booster-adults.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/world/americas/canada-pfizer-booster-adults.html</a>
GIST	<p>Canada's health agency <a href="#">authorized booster shots</a> of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine nationwide on Tuesday, broadening eligibility to anyone over the age of 18, regardless of what vaccine they received initially.</p> <p>Health Canada, the federal department responsible for approving drugs, and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization had previously updated vaccine guidelines in September to recommend booster shots for seniors living in congregate settings and for people with compromised immune systems.</p>

	<p>The new <a href="#">guidelines</a> cite early evidence from two studies in Israel, including an Oct. 7 article <a href="#">published</a> in The New England Journal of Medicine, which found that rates of “severe illness were substantially lower” for those who received a third Pfizer-BioNTech dose. Israel approved those booster shots on July 30.</p> <p>In Canada, where the administration of health care falls under provincial control, some provinces had already begun to offer booster doses based on the interim federal guidelines. On Oct. 29, eligibility was expanded to frontline health workers, adults over 70, First Nations communities, and people who received two doses of AstraZeneca or one dose of the Johnson &amp; Johnson vaccine.</p> <p>Provinces including Ontario, British Columbia and Saskatchewan have already begun administering booster shots to these populations, or to people traveling to countries that <a href="#">require certain vaccines</a>.</p> <p>The Health Canada announcement on Tuesday standardized eligibility criteria across the country. The agency recommended that adults receive the Pfizer booster at least six months after their last dose.</p> <p>Pfizer is also seeking regulatory approval for its vaccine to be administered to children aged 5 to 11, <a href="#">Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced</a> last month, with the country slated to receive 2.9 million pediatric doses when the authorization is granted.</p> <p>As of Oct. 30, close to 74 percent of the country’s population was fully vaccinated, according to federal <a href="#">data</a>.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/09 Wholesale prices hit record highs: inflation</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/9/wholesale-prices-hit-record-highs-inflation-soars/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/9/wholesale-prices-hit-record-highs-inflation-soars/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Wholesale prices at the end of October surged by 8.6% since October 2020, the highest year-over-year increase recorded by the federal government since it began tracking the data in 2010, the Labor Department reported Tuesday.</p> <p>The report is bad news for consumers struggling with sticker shock as prices climb. It suggests that a high inflation rate is here to stay for a while despite the Biden administration’s insistence that it is temporary.</p> <p>“This is worrisome because of the level,” said Antonio Saravia, an associate economics professor at Mercer University. “That’s a huge number. It’s the highest number we’ve seen in 11 years. It shows that inflation is not slowing down and prices continue to rise.”</p> <p>Wholesale prices are what businesses pay for goods before making them available to the public. As wholesale costs rise, businesses often increase their prices, passing the expense along to consumers.</p> <p>Wholesale prices of apparel, footwear, truck transportation, retail food and alcohol, hospital outpatient care, machinery, equipment, parts and supplies all surged last month, the Labor Department said.</p> <p>The report also found that the core Producer Price Index (PPI), which measures price changes in goods and services sold, excluding highly volatile food and energy, also surged last month. Core PPI rose 6.2%, up from October 2020, also a record since the Labor Department began monitoring core PPI more than 11 years ago.</p> <p>A 6.7% increase in gasoline prices accounted for a third of that increase, the Labor Department said. The national average price for a gallon of regular gasoline is \$3.41, up about 40% from \$2.42 in February 2020, according to the Department of Energy.</p> <p>The Energy Information Administration estimates that households using natural gas for heat will spend 30% more than last winter. The agency, the independent statistics arm of the Energy Department, said the costs could be 50% higher if winter is 10% colder than average.</p>

The agency estimates that the average U.S. household will spend \$746 on natural gas heat this winter.

Investment bank Goldman Sachs warned this week that inflation will “likely get worse before it gets better.”

The Biden administration insists that prices are rising as a temporary effect of ending COVID-19 pandemic closures.

But prices are rising at rates not seen in 30 years, and the situation has worsened because chaos in the global supply chain has made some goods more difficult to obtain.

The Biden administration’s actions also have contributed to the inflation. The Federal Reserve has kept interest rates low, prompting businesses to demand more loans, which increases the supply of money in the economy, a fundamental cause of inflation.

On top of the low interest rates, Congress last week approved Mr. Biden’s \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill and is expected to begin debate soon on his \$1.75 trillion social spending bill. Both measures will increase the flow of government spending, thus putting further pressure on the money supply.

Mr. Biden said the spending bills will ease inflation by creating jobs and reducing supply chain bottlenecks. The infrastructure bill, which is awaiting Mr. Biden’s signature, includes funding to modernize ports and highways to reduce supply chain logjams.

“The bipartisan infrastructure deal will help ease inflationary pressures, lowering costs for working families,” Mr. Biden said in a Twitter post Sunday.

He also has touted the massive social spending bill as a way to curb inflation. As Mr. Biden sees it, the bill would increase access to child care, bringing more parents into the labor market, thus lowering competition for employees.

With many workers sitting on the sidelines as the economy recovers from pandemic shutdowns, businesses have been forced to offer higher wages and bonuses to attract talent. Those increases are then passed along to consumers.

Mr. Saravia sees the situation differently.

“The supply chain and labor shortage raise prices, but inflation is always attributed to the money supply,” he said. “If we continue to spend at the pace we are spending, that is going to put pressure on the Fed to print money. It has to be a combined effort between the federal government and the Fed to slow down.”

After insisting that high inflation is temporary, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell last week acknowledged that prices won’t stabilize anytime soon.

“We see shortages and bottlenecks persisting into next year, well into next year,” Mr. Powell told reporters last week. “We see higher inflation persisting.”

Officials at the central bank signaled Monday that they could raise interest rates before the end of 2022 if inflation doesn’t ease.

The Fed has split on whether to raise interest rates in late 2022 or early 2023, but now it appears it will act sooner.

“The first three months of 2022 are going to be very important about what the Fed signals and if they are serious about stopping inflation,” Mr. Savaria said.

HEADLINE	11/09 Informers key to enforcing mandate
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/9/informers-key-in-enforcing-biden-vaccine-mandate/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/9/informers-key-in-enforcing-biden-vaccine-mandate/</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — To enforce President Joe Biden’s forthcoming COVID-19 mandate, the U.S. Labor Department is going to need a lot of help. Its Occupational Safety and Health Administration doesn’t have nearly enough workplace safety inspectors to do the job.</p> <p>So the government will rely upon a corps of informers to identify violations of the order: Employees who will presumably be concerned enough to turn in their own employers if their co-workers go unvaccinated or fail to undergo weekly tests to show they’re virus-free.</p> <p>What’s not known is just how many employees will be willing to accept some risk to themselves - or their job security - for blowing the whistle on their own employers. Without them, though, experts say the government would find it harder to achieve its goal of requiring tens of millions of workers at companies with 100 or more employees to be fully vaccinated by Jan. 4 or be tested weekly and wear a mask on the job.</p> <p>“There is no army of OSHA inspectors that is going to be knocking on employers door or even calling them,” said Debbie Berkowitz, a former OSHA chief of staff who is a fellow at Georgetown University’s Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor. “They’re going to rely on workers and their union representatives to file complaints where the company is totally flouting the law.”</p> <p>Jim Frederick, the acting chief of OSHA, told reporters that this agency will focus on job sites “where workers need assistance to have a safe and healthy workplace.”</p> <p>“That typically comes through in the form of a complaint,” Frederick added.</p> <p>Critics warn that whistleblowers have often faced retaliation from their employers and that OSHA has offered little protection when they do.</p> <p>The new mandate, which Biden announced last week, is the administration’s most far-reaching step yet to prod more Americans to get a vaccine that has been widely available since early spring. The mandate will cover an estimated 84 million employees.</p> <p>The president called the move necessary to combat an outbreak that has killed 750,000 Americans and that continues to spread. Companies that fail to comply will face fines of nearly \$14,000 per “serious” violation. Employers found to be “willful” or repeat violators would be subject to fines of up to ten times that amount.</p> <p>The mandate has run into furious opposition, though, from leaders of mainly Republican-led states who have condemned the plan as an unlawful case of federal overreach and who immediately challenged the vaccine-or-test requirements in court. On Saturday, the Biden administration endured a setback when a federal appeals court in New Orleans temporarily halted the mandate, saying it posed “grave statutory and constitutional issues.”</p> <p>Should the mandate survive its legal challenges, though, the task of enforcing it would fall on OSHA, the small Labor Department agency that was established 50 years ago to police workplace safety and protect workers from such dangers as toxic chemicals, rickety ladders and cave-ins at construction sites.</p> <p>OSHA has jurisdiction in 29 states. Other states, including California and Michigan, have their own federally approved workplace safety agencies. These states will have an additional month - until early February - to adopt their own version of the COVID mandate, equal to or tougher than OSHA’s.</p> <p>For a task as enormous as enforcing the new vaccine mandate, OSHA and its state “partners” are stretched thin. Just 1,850 inspectors will oversee 130 million workers at 8 million job sites. So the agencies must rely on whistleblowers.</p>

OSHA urges workers to first bring unsafe or unhealthy working conditions to the attention of their employers “if possible.” Employees could also file a confidential safety complaint with OSHA or have a case filed by a representative, such as a lawyer, a union representative or a member of the clergy. But they have no right to sue their employer in court for federal safety violations.

Typically, 20% to 25% of OSHA inspections originate with a complaint.

“You fill out a form or somebody fills out a form for you,” said Berkowitz, the former OSHA chief of staff. “And that’s all workers have. If OSHA decides not to inspect, that’s it. Or if OSHA inspects but decides not to cite the employer, that’s it. ... So it’s a pretty weak law.”

Only OSHA can bring cases over violations of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, the law that is meant to provide safe workplaces. Going outside OSHA to sue employers for negligence is all but impossible, say Berkowitz and other worker advocates.

State worker compensation programs - which reimburse injured workers for medical costs and lost wages and provide death benefits to survivors of those killed - include no-fault provisions that block most lawsuits.

Even sounding the alarm can be risky.

“Technically,” Berkowitz said, “the law says that companies can’t retaliate against a worker for raising a health and safety issue or filing an OSHA complaint or even reporting an injury. But retaliation is rampant.”

OSHA can pursue employers who punish workers for speaking out against unsafe working conditions. Last month, for example, the agency sued a luxury car dealer in Austin, Texas, that it said fired an employee who had warned co-workers about potential coronavirus hazards in the workplace.

But in a report co-written by Berkowitz, the National Employment Law Project, which advocates for worker rights, found that OSHA dismissed - without investigating - more than half the COVID-related complaints of retaliation it received from whistleblowers. Just 2% of complaints were resolved in the five-month period last year that the law project studied. Workers have just 30 days to file an OSHA complaint over retaliation.

“OSHA needs to improve its handling of whistleblower complaints,” the Labor Department’s Inspector General, its internal watchdog, concluded last year. “When OSHA fails to respond in a timely manner, it could leave workers to suffer emotionally and financially, and may also lead to the erosion of key evidence and witnesses.”

Still, most companies are considered likely to comply with the COVID mandate, as they mostly do with other OSHA rules. Some employers were likely relieved: They may have wanted to require inoculations on their own but worried that they’d alienate anti-vax workers and possibly lose them to employers that didn’t require vaccinations.

“Most employers - they’re law abiding,” says David Michaels, a former OSHA chief who is an epidemiologist and professor of public health at George Washington University. “They’re trying to make sure that they meet the requirements of every law and regulation .. Now OSHA will follow up. They’ll respond to complaints. They’ll do spot checks. They’ll issue citations and fines, and they’ll make a big deal of those” to discourage other potential violators.

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HEADLINE	11/09 Veterans Day focus: veteran homelessness
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/9/veteran-homelessness-focus-nation-honors-those-who/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/9/veteran-homelessness-focus-nation-honors-those-who/</a>



The tent city outside the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Medical Center campus just off the 405 Freeway resembled more a military encampment than a makeshift shantytown thrown up by vagrants. The tents were lined up with a soldierly precision, and each sported a prominent American flag.

The impressive display was a mixture of pride and tragedy. Known as “Veterans Row,” the site was home to dozens of people who served in the U.S. military in every conflict from Vietnam to Afghanistan and now, out of uniform, are living on the streets of the country they once defended.

“We’re not hurting anybody out here,” Vietnam veteran Deavin Sesson told KTLA-TV. “We clean up our own messes, [and] we clean up our own trash.”

Although exact numbers are difficult to track, most officials say approximately 40,000 U.S. military veterans are without permanent, safe shelter on an average night. Speaking at the National Press Club on Tuesday, Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough decried “veteran homelessness” as a phrase in the English language that has no right to exist.

But American military veterans have not been spared by a widening affordability and availability crisis that has left Los Angeles, the District of Columbia and other localities across the country dealing with a rising number of the homeless.

“This happens to be a problem in many cities,” Mr. McDonough said.

Veterans Affairs Department officials working with local agencies found more permanent housing for “Veterans Row” residents by the end of October. The VA secretary said the next step is to take on the larger homeless veterans problem in Los Angeles and then spread the message nationwide.

“We’re prioritizing this across the country. We’re building up momentum in LA to demonstrate to the country that this is a very fixable problem,” he said.

The issue has become an early challenge for Mr. McDonough, who became secretary of veterans affairs in February 2021. He was a top White House adviser in the Obama administration and is one of the few in the VA post who never served in the military.

“We now rely on a very small percentage of our population to fight for the rest of us,” he said.

### Bridging the gap

With Veterans Day this week, officials say they are on the lookout for any opportunity to bridge the gap between veterans and the vast majority of the population who never served in uniform. The lack of social bonds to the civilian world can leave veterans feeling isolated and disconnected, Mr. McDonough said.

“It’s not on veterans to break down that barrier. It’s on all of us, particularly those who aren’t vets,” he said. “It can be something as simple as reaching out to the veterans in their lives and lending a hand.”

Mr. McDonough acknowledged Tuesday the recent death of former Sen. Max Cleland, the Georgia Democrat who was VA administrator under President Carter before it became a Cabinet-level position. A disabled Army veteran of the Vietnam War, he is credited with making the VA more responsive.

“He understood that we at the VA work for veterans, not the other way around,” Mr. McDonough said. “He installed that ethos in everything we do. We will all miss Max Cleland dearly.”

The Biden administration’s rapid withdrawal from Afghanistan after 20 years, which prompted the collapse of the U.S.-aligned Afghan government and military, affected some veterans’ mental health, Mr. McDonough told NBC News. With the military representing an ever-shrinking proportion of the



overall U.S. population, many Afghanistan veterans served multiple tours in a country that is now ruled by the insurgent Taliban movement they fought.

“If you think about the crisis that we’re dealing with, out of the summer in Afghanistan, the images from Afghanistan, the stories from Afghanistan, we did see an uptick in concern from our veterans,” McDonough said, according to NBC. “Those vets are seeking and getting care in a lot of different ways.”

The pandemic has been no less devastating to the VA than it has been to the rest of the country. The staffers and employees have been “nothing less than heroic” while battling COVID-19. More than 4 million people have been vaccinated at VA hospitals. Overtime shifts were common for employees who risked their lives to save the lives of veterans, Mr. McDonough said.

“We are now providing more care, more services and more benefits to veterans than ever before,” he said. “We’re going to continue to do better for veterans.”

The VA was the first federal agency to require staffers to be vaccinated for COVID-19. While more than 90% of the agency’s health care professionals have received the shot, Mr. McDonough said, it’s clear that some employees will seek religious exemptions. The agency won’t challenge the legitimacy of the individual claim, but applicants will face a high bar for acceptance, he said.

“We may have so many people who have claimed a religious exemption that we can’t safely provide care,” Mr. McDonough said. “We reserve the right to deny the religious exemption.”

Patients won’t be refused medical care if they haven’t received the COVID-19 vaccination, but VA employees who refuse the shot could find themselves without a job, he said.

“The whole process could take as long as three months,” he said, “but the goal of the disciplinary process is not to fire people. The goal is to get people vaccinated.”

Assisting veterans exposed to toxic substances on a battlefield is also one of the core missions of the VA. Mr. McDonough said the agency disbursed millions of dollars to veterans and paid toxic exposure claims to Gulf War veterans. Veterans have waited far too long for the support, he said.

“This is just the beginning, not the end of those efforts,” Mr. McDonough said.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Lawsuit: Navy SEALs cite religious concern</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/9/navy-seals-cite-religious-concerns-suit-against-va/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/9/navy-seals-cite-religious-concerns-suit-against-va/</a>
GIST	<p>Twenty-six members of the elite Navy SEALs filed a lawsuit sued Tuesday claiming the government is arbitrarily refusing their requests for religious exemptions from the Biden administration’s COVID-19 vaccination mandate.</p> <p>Nine other Navy personnel involved in special operations joined the action, according to the complaint filed in the U.S. District Court’s Northern Texas District, including five special warfare combatant craft crewmen, three Navy divers and one explosive ordnance disposal technician.</p> <p>The plaintiffs, listed anonymously to protect their classified and confidential locations, claim they’ve been threatened with court-martial or involuntary separation from the service.</p> <p>Attorneys with the public-interest law firm First Liberty Institute, which filed the suit, said they represent service members with a combined total of more than 350 years of military service and over 100 combat deployments.</p>

The lawsuit claims the mandate violates the First Amendment right to religious free exercise, as well as provisions of the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and that the vaccine mandates are not in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

The plaintiffs claimed various reasons for seeking religious exemptions, including objections to the alleged use of “aborted fetal cell lines” in the development, testing, or manufacture of the COVID-19 jabs.

“Multiple plaintiffs,” the complaint alleges, believe “God instructed them” not to receive the vaccine. One said they have a “sincere religious belief” that “trace animal cells ... such as from swine” should not be injected into their body.

The Washington Times asked the Defense Department’s public affairs office for comment and did not immediately receive a response.

To date, the Navy has not granted a single religious exemption to the COVID-19 mandate, the plaintiffs allege, though the service has the discretion to grant such exemptions.

Although the Navy said it has granted “five permanent medical exemptions” to vaccination, the plaintiffs claim, the service has not approved any religious vaccine exemptions “in the past seven years,” the lawsuit claims.

“This disdain for religious vaccine accommodations contrasts with Defendants’ grant of certain secular vaccine exemptions,” the filing states.

Attorney Mike Berry of First Liberty Institute said in a statement, “This appears to be an attempted ideological purge. Forcing a service member to choose between their faith and serving their country is abhorrent to the Constitution and America’s values. ... It’s appalling and it has to stop before any more harm is done to our national security.”

Federal mandates on COVID-19 vaccinations are being challenged in various courts, with dozens of actions filed last week opposing the Labor Department’s order that firms with 100 or more workers must ensure all employees are either vaccinated or tested weekly.

On Saturday the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit temporarily blocked implementation of the private-business mandate pending further review.

But the military has a long history of requiring vaccinations, going back to George Washington’s order at the end of 1776 that soldiers in the Continental Army be inoculated against smallpox, which had caused many deaths in the fledgling fighting force.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/10 Ethiopia detains 16 UN workers: terrorists</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/10/tigray-conflict-ethiopia-detains-16-un-workers-and-accuses-them-of-terror-act">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/10/tigray-conflict-ethiopia-detains-16-un-workers-and-accuses-them-of-terror-act</a>
GIST	<p>At least 16 <a href="#">United Nations</a> local employees have been detained in Ethiopia’s capital, the UN said, and a government spokesperson asserted they were held for their “participation in terror” under a state of emergency as the country’s year-long war escalates and ethnic Tigrayans face a new wave of arrests.</p> <p>All the detained staffers are Tigrayan, a humanitarian worker told the Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.</p> <p>The UN said it was given no reason for the detentions, but Tigrayans, including lawyers, have reported widespread detentions in Addis Ababa since the state of emergency was declared, saying people are being picked up on the basis of their ethnicity alone.</p>

“They are being detained in facilities against their will,” UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday, adding that some were detained over the past few days during a visit to [Ethiopia](#) by the UN humanitarian chief. Dujarric said another six staff members were detained but then released, and a number of employees’ dependents have also been detained. The UN has asked Ethiopia’s foreign ministry for their immediate release.

Government spokesperson Legesse Tulu said the detentions occurred “because of their wrongdoing and their participation in terror act”, without giving details. He said it has no connection “with their office and job”.

Ethiopia’s government has said it is detaining people suspected of supporting the rival Tigray forces who have been fighting the government for the past year.

In Washington, state department spokesperson Ned Price said that “if reports are true”, detentions of people based on ethnicity are “completely unacceptable”.

The government-created Ethiopian Human Rights Commission this week noted with concern that the new wave of arrests “appeared to be based on ethnicity” and included older adults and mothers with children. People detained included priests, monks and other clergy in the Ethiopian Orthodox church.

Envoys from the African Union (AU) and the United States are trying to encourage an immediate ceasefire by Ethiopia’s government and the Tigray forces who long dominated the national government before prime minister Abiy Ahmed came to power. The government earlier this year declared the Tigray forces a terrorist group.

The AU envoy on Monday said he sees a small “window of opportunity” as the warring sides both agree that a political solution is required. But Ethiopia’s UN ambassador said reaching a solution would not be easy, since there is the government on one side and a “criminal group” on the other.

Thousands of people have been killed in the year-long war, thousands have been detained and millions have been displaced. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of people in the Tigray region face famine conditions under a government blockade meant to deny food, medicine and other aid from potentially reaching Tigray forces.

During his four-day Ethiopia visit, UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths met the prime minister and visited “de facto authorities” in Tigray to advocate for more access to millions of people in need.

Ethiopia’s government last month expelled seven UN staffers from the country, accusing them without evidence of falsely inflating the scale of the crisis. The move was condemned by other nations and international agencies.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 OECD countries’ Covid deaths 16% rise</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/09/health/oecd-covid-report/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/09/health/oecd-covid-report/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>(CNN)The Covid-19 pandemic caused a 16% rise in expected deaths among the 38 members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, hitting overall life expectancy in 24 out of 30 members, the organization said Tuesday.</p> <p>Life expectancy fell the most in Spain and the United States, the group said, with the United States losing 1.6 years of life per capita on average over the year and a half of the pandemic so far, and Spain losing 1.5 years, the OECD said.</p> <p>"COVID 19 contributed, directly and indirectly, to a 16% increase in the expected number of deaths in 2020 and the first half of 2021 across OECD countries," the group said in its report.</p>

The global death toll for Covid-19 passed the 5 million mark last week, [according to John Hopkins University](#). The virus has killed more than 750,000 people in the United States alone. Several reports have shown it has [impacted life expectancy in the US](#).

The report found little change in which countries enjoy the longest comparative life expectancies. "Japan, Switzerland and Spain lead a large group of 27 OECD countries in which life expectancy at birth exceeded 80 years in 2019," the report reads.

"A second group, including the United States and a number of central and eastern European countries, had a life expectancy between 77 and 80 years. Mexico and Latvia had the lowest life expectancy, at less than 76 years." Life expectancy has been growing over the past century, although that growth had slowed in recent years and the pandemic has had an acute effect.

"COVID 19 has disproportionately hit vulnerable populations. More than 90% of recorded COVID 19 deaths have occurred among those aged 60 and over. There has also been a clear social gradient, with disadvantaged people, those living in deprived areas, and most ethnic minorities and immigrants at higher risk of infection and death," the report added.

The OECD, which groups wealthy and mid-tier nations, and whose reports set some international standards for comparing spending, standards of living, health outcomes and other national goals, releases regular reports that attempt to parse out how health spending affects outcomes such as cancer care and overall life expectancy.

This year's report finds the death rate from Covid-19 in the US was close to the average for the OECD.

The group, whose members include India, Indonesia, Japan, Switzerland and the US, analyzed Covid-19 death rates to find 1,824 Covid-19 deaths per 1 million population in 2020 and the first half of 2021 for the US. The US had 13,197 Covid-19 cases per 100,000 people -- higher than the OECD average. Plus, the US has about average vaccination rates, with 55% of the population fully vaccinated at the time the report was written.

The UK had 2,232 Covid-19 deaths per million population, 11,608 Covid-19 cases per 100,000 population and a vaccination rate of 66%. Japan had 117 Covid-19 deaths per 1 million population, 1,347 Covid-19 cases per 100,000 population and a vaccination rate of 61.2%. Canada had 699 Covid-19 deaths per 1 million population, 4,347 Covid-19 cases per 100,000 population and a vaccination rate of 71.2%.

### **Pandemic raises global rates of depression, anxiety**

The report found big increases in certain mental illnesses with the pandemic.

"The mental health impact of the pandemic has been huge, with prevalence of anxiety and depression more than double levels observed pre-crisis in most countries with available data, most notably in Mexico, the United Kingdom and the United States," it said.

"The prevalence of anxiety and depression in early 2020 was double or more the level observed in previous years in a number of countries, including Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and the United States," it added.

"In France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, prevalence of symptoms of anxiety and depression increased during periods when there were peaks in COVID 19 infections and deaths, and when there were increased containment measures in place," it said, citing reports from public health departments in France and the UK and the US National Center for Health Statistics.

"The mental health impact of the pandemic has been particularly hard for the doctors, nurses, long-term care workers, and other health care workers working in close proximity to patients," the organization said in its report.

"Healthcare workers have reported high rates of anxiety, depression, burnout, and turnover since the onset of the pandemic," the report reads.

"In the United States, a survey of frontline health workers found that more than three fifths (62%) reported that the stress or worry over COVID 19 affected their mental health negatively, and close to half (49%) reported that the stress had affected their physical health," it adds. "Almost one third of respondents reported needing or having received mental health services due to the pandemic."

And nurses may have been affected more than doctors. "A survey of 33 national nursing associations found that three fifths reported sometimes or regularly receiving reports from nurses about mental health distress linked to the pandemic," the report added, citing a survey conducted by the International Council of Nurses.

"In a survey of the workforce across the European Union, 70% of workers in the health sector -- more than any other sector of the workforce -- report that they believed their job put them at risk of COVID 19 infection," the report reads.

"In a March 2020 survey of health care workers in Italy, close to half (49%) exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome and one quarter symptoms of depression. Frontline workers had significantly higher odds of exhibiting post-traumatic stress syndrome than those who did not report working with COVID 19 patients," it added.

"An April 2020 survey of health care professionals in Spain found that close to three fifths of respondents reported symptoms of anxiety (59%) and/or post-traumatic stress disorder (57%), with close to half (46%) exhibiting symptoms of depression. In England (United Kingdom), nearly half of respondents to the NHS (National Health Service) staff survey (44%) reported feeling unwell due to work-related stress over the previous year, a 9% increase from 2019."

#### **Pandemic causes spike in health care spending, too**

The pandemic caused a spike in health spending across many of the organization's 38 member nations, the report found.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a sharp increase in health spending across the OECD. Coupled with reductions in economic activity, the average health spending to GDP (gross domestic product) ratio jumped from 8.8% in 2019 to 9.7% in 2020, across OECD countries with available data.

"Countries severely affected by the pandemic reported unprecedented increases. The United Kingdom estimated an increase from 10.2% in 2019 to 12.8% in 2020, while Slovenia anticipated its share of spending on health rising from 8.5% to more than 10%," the report reads.

The ratio for the US was the highest for all the OECD by far in 2019, at 16.8% of GDP, but a figure was not available for 2020. "With the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic, initial data for 2020 points to a sharp increase in overall health spending, of around 5.1% on average," the report reads.

And the US remained at the head of the pack in terms of overall health spending. "The United States spends considerably more than any other country (almost \$11,000 per person, adjusted for purchasing power, in 2019)," the report reads. For comparison, Japan spends an average of \$4,691 per person on health care and the UK spends \$4,500.

Health care spending per capita is also high in Switzerland, Norway and Germany.

Seven countries spend much less per person on average on health care but have higher than average life expectancy, the report noted. "These seven countries are Italy, Korea, Portugal, Spain, Slovenia, Greece and Israel," the report reads. "The only country in the bottom right quadrant is the United States, with much higher spending than in all other OECD countries, but lower life expectancy than the OECD average."

HEADLINE	<b>11/09 OSHA issues Covid emergency standard</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.healthcarefaciliestoday.com/posts/OSHA-Releases-New-COVID-19-Emergency-Standard--26868">https://www.healthcarefaciliestoday.com/posts/OSHA-Releases-New-COVID-19-Emergency-Standard--26868</a>
GIST	<p>The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced a new emergency temporary standard (ETS) to protect more than 84 million workers from the spread of the coronavirus on the job.</p> <p>Under the standard, covered employers must develop, implement and enforce a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy, unless they adopt a policy requiring employees to choose to either be vaccinated or undergo regular COVID-19 testing and wear a face covering at work. OSHA estimates that this rule will save thousands of lives and prevent more than 250,000 hospitalizations due to workplace exposure to COVID-19 over the course of the ETS.</p> <p>“COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on workers, and we continue to see dangerous levels of cases,” says U.S. Labor Secretary Marty Walsh. “We must take action to implement this emergency temporary standard to contain the virus and protect people in the workplace against the grave danger of COVID-19. Many businesses understand the benefits of having their workers vaccinated against COVID-19, and we expect many will be pleased to see this OSHA rule go into effect.”</p> <p>The emergency temporary standard covers employers with 100 or more employees – firmwide or companywide – and provides options for compliance. The ETS also requires employers to provide paid time to workers to get vaccinated and to allow for paid leave to recover from any side effects. The ETS will cover two-thirds of the nation’s private-sector workforce. In the 26 states and two territories with OSHA state plans, the ETS will also cover public sector workers employed by state and local governments, including educators and school staff.</p> <p>The ETS also requires employers to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine the vaccination status of each employee, obtain acceptable proof of vaccination status from vaccinated employees and maintain records and a roster of each employee’s vaccination status.</li><li>• Require employees to provide prompt notice when they test positive for COVID-19 or receive a COVID-19 diagnosis. Employers must then remove the employee from the workplace, regardless of vaccination status; employers must not allow them to return to work until they meet required criteria.</li><li>• Ensure each worker who is not fully vaccinated is tested for COVID-19 at least weekly (if the worker is in the workplace at least once a week) or within 7 days before returning to work (if the worker is away from the workplace for a week or longer).</li><li>• Ensure that, in most circumstances, each employee who has not been fully vaccinated wears a face covering when indoors or when occupying a vehicle with another person for work purposes.</li></ul> <p>The emergency temporary standard does not require employers to pay for testing. Employers may be required to pay for testing to comply with other laws, regulations, collective bargaining agreements, or other collectively negotiated agreements. Employers are also not required to pay for face coverings.</p> <p>The ETS is effective immediately upon its publication in the Federal Register. Employers must comply with most requirements within 30 days of publication and with testing requirements within 60 days of publication.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Moderna, US at odds: vaccine patent rights</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/us/moderna-vaccine-patent.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/us/moderna-vaccine-patent.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — <a href="#">Moderna</a> and the National Institutes of Health are in a bitter dispute over who deserves credit for inventing the central component of the company’s powerful coronavirus vaccine, a conflict that has broad implications for the vaccine’s long-term distribution and billions of dollars in future profits.</p>



The vaccine grew out of a four-year collaboration between Moderna and the N.I.H., the government's biomedical research agency — a partnership that was widely hailed when the shot was found to be highly effective. A year ago this month, the government called it the “N.I.H.-Moderna Covid-19 vaccine.”

The agency says three scientists at its Vaccine Research Center — Dr. John R. Mascola, the center's director; Dr. Barney S. Graham, who recently retired; and Dr. Kizzmekia S. Corbett, who is now at Harvard — worked with [Moderna](#) scientists to design the genetic sequence that prompts the vaccine to produce an immune response, and should be named on the “principal patent application.”

Moderna disagrees. In a July [filing](#) with the United States Patent and Trademark Office, the company said it had “reached the good-faith determination that these individuals did not co-invent” the component in question. Its application for the patent, which has not yet been issued, names several of its own employees as the sole inventors.

The N.I.H. had been in talks with Moderna for more than a year to try to resolve the dispute; the company's July filing caught the agency by surprise, according to a government official familiar with the matter. It is unclear when the patent office will act, but its role is simply to determine whether a patent is warranted. If the two sides do not come to terms by the time a patent is issued, the government will have to decide whether to go to court — a battle that could be costly and messy.

The dispute is about much more than scientific accolades or ego. If the three agency scientists are named on the patent along with the Moderna employees, the federal government could have more of a say in which companies manufacture the vaccine, which in turn could influence which countries get access. It would also secure a nearly unfettered right to license the technology, which could bring millions into the federal treasury.

The fight comes amid mounting frustration in the U.S. government and elsewhere with Moderna's limited efforts to get its vaccine to poorer countries. The company, which has not previously brought a product to market, received nearly \$10 billion in taxpayer funding to develop the vaccine, test it and provide doses to the federal government. It has already lined up supply deals worth about \$35 billion through the end of 2022.

Drs. Mascola, Graham and Corbett declined to comment. But in statements to The New York Times, the N.I.H. and Moderna confirmed the conflict, which has been simmering for more than a year behind closed doors.

“N.I.H. disagrees with Moderna's inventorship determination,” said Kathy Stover, a spokeswoman for the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the branch of the institutes that oversees vaccine research. “Omitting N.I.H. inventors from the principal patent application deprives N.I.H. of a co-ownership interest in that application and the patent that will eventually issue from it.”

A spokeswoman for Moderna, Colleen Hussey, said the company had “all along recognized the substantial role that the N.I.H. has played in developing Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine.”

But she said the company was legally bound to exclude the agency from the core application, because “only Moderna's scientists designed” the vaccine.

Scientists familiar with the situation said they saw it as a betrayal by Moderna, which has received [\\$1.4 billion](#) to develop and test its vaccine and another \$8.1 billion to provide the country with half a billion doses. John P. Moore, a professor of microbiology and immunology at Cornell University, called it a matter of “fairness and morality at the scientific level,” adding, “These two institutions have been working together for four or five years.”

As is typical in the pharmaceutical industry, Moderna has sought [a number of patents](#) in the United States and overseas related to different aspects of its Covid vaccine technology. But experts said the disputed



patent was the most important one in Moderna's growing intellectual property portfolio. It seeks to patent the genetic sequence that instructs the body's cells to make a harmless version of the spike proteins that stud the surface of the coronavirus, which triggers [an immune response](#).

While it has not publicly acknowledged the rift until now, the Biden administration has expressed frustration that Moderna has not done more to [provide its vaccine to poorer nations](#) even as it racks up huge profits.

Activists have pleaded with the government to push Moderna to share its vaccine formula and transfer its technology to manufacturers who could produce it at a lower cost for poorer nations. But administration officials say they [lack the authority](#) to require the company to do so.

Last week, [the advocacy group Public Citizen wrote to Dr. Francis S. Collins](#), the director of the N.I.H., urging him "to publicly clarify the role of the N.I.H. in the invention of the vaccine" and to explain what he intended to do "to ensure the contributions of federal scientists are fully recognized." The group has not gotten a response.

"It's not just about bragging rights," said [Zain Rizvi](#), a drug policy expert at Public Citizen who researched Moderna's patent filings. "It's also about supply. Patents are development monopolies, and in a pandemic it is a terrible idea to have a private corporation have a monopoly on part of a lifesaving technology."

If the N.I.H. scientists were named as co-inventors on the patent, the agency would generally not need Moderna's permission to license it to other companies or organizations, patent law experts said. In theory, that could help expand the supply of the Moderna vaccine.

Moderna has [pledged](#) not to enforce its Covid vaccine patents during the pandemic. But a license from the government would provide additional legal reassurance to manufacturers and allow them to keep producing the vaccine after the pandemic, experts said.

With a license from the U.S. government, "you've got the force of law rather than just a statement in the public domain," said Ameet Sarpatwari, an expert on pharmaceutical policy and law at Harvard Medical School.

But even with a license, manufacturers would lack crucial components for quickly making Moderna's vaccine — including the recipe and the company's technical know-how.

A patent license is "just one piece of an otherwise very large jigsaw puzzle," said Jacob S. Sherkow, an expert on biotechnology patent law at the University of Illinois College of Law. "The patent license does not build factories, it doesn't source raw materials, it doesn't train workers."

The N.I.H. could benefit financially from licensing out the patent. Several experts said it was difficult to know how much, but Mr. Sarpatwari estimated the agency could reap tens of millions of dollars.

For the company, having patents solely in its name helps "support a narrative that Moderna was not just the lucky recipient of unprecedented massive investment by the U.S. government, but that Moderna made unique and essential contributions on its own," said Christopher Morten, an expert on pharmaceutical patent law at Columbia Law School.

That could help the company justify its prices and rebuff pressure to make its vaccine available to poorer countries.

"Moderna wants exclusive ownership and control of this patent," Mr. Morten said. "They want to be the only organization that decides where mRNA-1273 is made, how it's made, who makes it, what price it's sold for. And co-ownership of this patent is a threat to that control."

The story of the public-private collaboration has been one of the few bright spots of the pandemic. The three government scientists — especially Dr. Corbett, who emerged as a role model for young Black women in science and has worked to address vaccine hesitancy in minority communities — have been hailed as heroes.

Moderna, a young company that had never before brought a product to market, became a household name virtually overnight. The vaccine is on track to bring in [up to \\$18 billion](#) in revenue for Moderna this year. The company has already booked deals for next year worth up to \$20 billion. Sales of its vaccine both this year and next are likely to rank among the highest in a single year for any medical product in history.

Dr. Graham, who was the Vaccine Research Center's deputy director before his retirement, began his work on coronaviruses long before the pandemic. In 2017, Dr. Graham and Jason McLellan, a scientist now at the University of Texas at Austin, led a team of researchers, including Dr. Corbett, that figured out how to employ protein engineering to stabilize the spike proteins on the coronavirus before they fuse with other cells.

That technology, which has been [patented by N.I.H.](#) and its academic collaborators, is foundational to a number of coronavirus vaccines, including the ones made by both Moderna and its main competitor, Pfizer-BioNTech. But while BioNTech and other companies have paid to license the technology, Moderna has not — another sore point between the company and the government, a senior administration official said. Moderna declined to comment on it.

Moderna and the government researchers had been working together for four years on projects involving other coronaviruses when the new one emerged in China. In January 2020, N.I.H. and Moderna “agreed to collaborate and jointly develop” a vaccine, Ms. Stover said.

The Vaccine Research Center quickly zeroed in on the gene for the virus's spike protein and sent the data to Moderna in a Microsoft Word file, Dr. Graham said [in an interview last year](#). Moderna said at the time that its scientists had independently identified the same gene. The company's chief executive, Stéphane Bancel, said Moderna plugged the data into its computers and came up with the design for an mRNA vaccine.

“We had two teams working in parallel, to increase the chances,” Mr. Bancel told the [M.I.T. Technology Review](#).

When Moderna [announced](#) a year ago that the vaccine had been found in a key trial to be spectacularly protective, the N.I.H. called it “[the N.I.H.-Moderna Covid-19 vaccine](#)” in its own news release. Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, who oversaw the research in his role as director of the allergy and infectious diseases institute, [said](#) that the “vaccine was actually developed in my institute's vaccine research center by a team of scientists led by Dr. Barney Graham and his close colleague, Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett.”

[Asked late last year about the comment](#), Mr. Bancel pushed back. “The vaccine technology was developed by Moderna,” he insisted.

Consumer advocacy groups and government watchdogs have long complained that the N.I.H. is not aggressive enough in protecting and asserting legal rights to its work — to the detriment of taxpayers, who often face high costs for drugs developed with government funding and research.

“It points to these broader issues that N.I.H. has with basically getting taken advantage of by pharma,” said James Krellenstein, a founder of PrEP4All, an AIDS advocacy group that successfully urged the Trump administration to sue [Gilead Sciences](#), accusing the company of making billions by infringing on government patents for H.I.V.-prevention drugs. The [suit is pending](#) in the U.S. District Court in Delaware.

Ms. Hussey, the Moderna spokeswoman, said that the “N.I.H. having rights under the patent application is not dependent on being listed as co-inventors.” She declined to answer additional questions about the rights she was referring to.

Scientists from the agency are named on a minor [patent application](#) that does not confer licensing power over the technology covered by the primary patent application. Ms. Stover, the spokeswoman for the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said that none of the agency’s collaboration agreements with Moderna “include language controlling the licensing of inventions that might result from that work.”

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HEADLINE	11/09 OK court tosses \$465M J&J opioid ruling
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/health/oklahoma-supreme-court-johnson-johnson-opioids.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/health/oklahoma-supreme-court-johnson-johnson-opioids.html</a>
GIST	<p>Oklahoma’s highest court on Tuesday threw out a 2019 ruling that required Johnson &amp; Johnson to pay the state \$465 million for its role in the opioid epidemic. It was the <a href="#">second time this month</a> that a court has invalidated a key legal strategy used by plaintiffs in thousands of cases attempting to hold the pharmaceutical industry responsible for the crisis.</p> <p>The Oklahoma Supreme Court, 5-1, rejected the state’s argument that the company violated “public nuisance” laws by aggressively overstating the benefits of its prescription opioid painkillers and downplaying the dangers.</p> <p>The ruling, along with a similar opinion by a California state judge on Nov. 1, could be a harbinger that plaintiffs’ hopes for favorable resolution in courts nationwide against opioid manufacturers, distributors and retailers will be dashed. The decision could also embolden the companies to dig in.</p> <p>But because most public nuisance laws are state-specific, it is unclear how much impact the Oklahoma decision could ultimately have on cases elsewhere. The Oklahoma judges’ decision underscored their reading of their state’s law.</p> <p>“Oklahoma public nuisance law does not extend to the manufacturing, marketing and selling of prescription opioids,” the judges wrote in Tuesday’s majority opinion.</p> <p>According to federal data, abuse of opioids has contributed to the deaths of some 500,000 people in the United States since the late 1990s, and the toll has worsened during the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>The Oklahoma case <a href="#">was the first state lawsuit against an opioids manufacturer to come to trial</a>. The ruling, in August 2019, was a heartening signal to plaintiffs’ lawyers around the country that their legal strategy could prevail — even though the amount of the company was ordered to pay was considerably less than the \$17 billion sought.</p> <p>In a statement, Johnson &amp; Johnson, referring to Janssen, its pharmaceutical division, said it had “deep sympathy” for everyone affected by the opioids epidemic. But the company added: “The clear and unassailable decision by the Oklahoma State Supreme Court reflects the facts of this case: Janssen’s actions relating to the marketing and promotion of these important prescription pain medications were appropriate and responsible and did not cause a public nuisance.”</p> <p>In their opinion, the judges gave weight to the company’s response that it had not promoted its products in recent years and had sold off one of its product lines in 2015. The judges decided that manufacturers could not be held “perpetually liable” for their products.</p> <p>The Oklahoma attorney general’s office had contended that health is a public right that Johnson &amp; Johnson violated under the state’s public nuisance law. Other opioid manufacturers targeted in the state’s lawsuit, including Teva and Purdue Pharma, settled their cases before this bench trial against Johnson &amp; Johnson began in <a href="#">May 2019</a>. This decision does not affect those agreements.</p>

John O'Connor, the Oklahoma attorney general, expressed disappointment with the decision, but said: "We are still pursuing our other pending claims against opioid distributors who have flooded our communities with these highly addictive drugs for decades. Oklahomans deserve nothing less."

In the new ruling, the judges said that Oklahoma's 1910 public nuisance law typically referred to an abrogation of a public right like access to roads or clean water or air. The judges found fault with the state's case, saying it failed to identify a public right under the nuisance law and had instead attempted to apply a "novel theory" to what was more likely a products liability case.

The harm alleged by the state, the judges said, stemmed from the company's legal product — prescription opioids approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Individuals suffered, the court decided, rather than the public at large.

Other case flaws cited by the judges echoed critiques made earlier this month by a California state trial judge who also found in favor of Johnson & Johnson. The company, the Oklahoma judges said, had no control over the distribution and use of its product once the drug left its purview — an argument used successfully by gun manufacturers to turn aside public nuisance litigation.

"Regulation of prescription opioids belongs to federal and state legislatures and their agencies," the Oklahoma judges wrote. They were alluding to the F.D.A., as well as to the Drug Enforcement Administration, which is supposed to monitor pill diversion, and to the state's own prescription monitoring program.

Elizabeth Burch, a law professor at the University of Georgia, cautioned that these two decisions should not be interpreted too broadly to predict the fate of other cases wending their way through courts, because other states have their own public nuisance laws.

She noted that the Oklahoma ruling went even further than the California decision, because it stated that public nuisance law couldn't be used against any entity in the drug supply chain, including distributors and pharmacies.

But she said the ruling could potentially influence plaintiffs' response to Johnson & Johnson's [major national settlement offer in July](#), when it proposed to pay \$5 billion over nine years to resolve all opioid litigation against it.

The company's offer has to be accepted by a majority of the thousands of local governments that have sued.

"If I was a plaintiff that was on the fence about whether to enter the J.&J. settlement, this ruling might push me closer to settling, if I was risk averse," Ms. Burch said.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Automakers, countries: phase out gas cars</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/climate/cars-zero-emissions-cop26.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/climate/cars-zero-emissions-cop26.html</a>
GIST	<p>GLASGOW — At least six major automakers — including Ford, Mercedes-Benz, General Motors and Volvo — and 31 national governments pledged on Wednesday to work toward phasing out sales of new gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles by 2040 worldwide, and by 2035 in "leading markets."</p> <p>But some of the world's biggest car manufacturers, including Toyota, Volkswagen, and the Nissan-Renault alliance did not join the pledge, which is not legally binding. And the governments of the United States, China and Japan, three of the largest car markets, also abstained.</p> <p>The <a href="#">announcement</a>, made during international climate talks here, was hailed by climate advocates as yet another sign that the days of the internal combustion engine could soon be numbered. Electric vehicles continue to set new global sales records each year and major car companies have recently begun</p>

investing [tens of billions of dollars](#) to retool their factories and churn out new battery-powered cars and light trucks.

“Having these major players making these commitments, though we need to make sure that they follow through, is really significant,” said Margo Oge, a former senior U.S. air quality official who now advises both environmental groups and auto companies. “It really tells us that these companies, and their boards, accept that the future is electric.”

The automakers that signed the pledge accounted for roughly one-quarter of global sales in 2019. Countries that joined the coalition included Britain, Canada, India, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Sweden. The addition of India was especially notable, since it is the world’s fourth-largest auto market and has not previously committed to eliminating emissions from its cars on a specific timeline.

Other countries vowing for the first time to sell only zero-emissions vehicles by a set date included Turkey, Croatia, Ghana and Rwanda.

California and Washington State also signed the pledge. Last year, Gov. Gavin Newsom of California [signed an executive order](#) saying that only new zero-emissions vehicles would be sold in the state by 2035, though regulators have not yet issued rules to make that happen. Washington had not previously made such a formal pledge.

The agreement states that automakers will “work toward reaching 100 percent zero-emission new car and van sales in leading markets by 2035 or earlier, supported by a business strategy that is in line with achieving this ambition, as we help build customer demand.”

Zero-emissions vehicles could include either plug-in electric vehicles or hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles, although the latter have struggled to gain market share. Electric cars can still indirectly produce emissions if, for instance, they are recharged with power from plants that burn coal or natural gas. But they [are generally considered cleaner overall than combustion engine vehicles](#) and do not create pollution from their tailpipes.

Two dozen vehicle fleet operators, including Uber and LeasePlan, also joined the coalition, vowing to operate only zero-emissions vehicles by 2030, “or earlier where markets allow.”

Worldwide, transportation accounts for roughly [one-fifth of humanity’s carbon dioxide emissions](#) that are responsible for climate change, with a little less than half of that coming from passenger vehicles such as cars and vans.

In recent years, spurred by concerns about global warming and air pollution, governments around the world — including China, the United States and the European Union — have begun heavily subsidizing electric vehicles and imposing more stringent emissions standards on new gasoline- and diesel-fueled cars.

The cost of lithium-ion batteries has also declined [roughly 80 percent since 2013](#), according to BloombergNEF, an energy research group, making electric vehicles increasingly competitive with traditional combustion engine vehicles, though many consumers remain wary of the new technology because of concerns like [the availability of charging stations](#).

“We have the technology to make clean road transport a reality and today it’s clear we have the willpower to do it in the next decade,” said Nigel Topping, who was appointed by the British government to the United Nations to be a “high level climate action champion.”

Some of the automakers that signed the agreement had already pledged to clean up the cars they produce. G.M. said in January that it [aimed to stop selling new gasoline-powered cars and light trucks by 2035](#) and will pivot to battery-powered vehicles. Volvo had said it expected its car lineup to be fully electric by 2030.

But the pledge appeared to commit some of the signatories to doing more than they had previously promised. Ford, which this year introduced an electric version of its best-selling F-150 pickup truck, had previously only said it expected 40 percent of its global vehicle mix to be electric by 2030.

“We are moving now to deliver breakthrough electric vehicles for the many rather than the few,” said Cynthia Williams, global director of sustainability at Ford.

The other two automakers that signed the pledge were BYD, a Chinese automaker that [has made major inroads](#) selling electric cars in Europe, as well as Jaguar Land Rover.

Some of the major automakers that did not sign the agreement are nonetheless investing heavily in electric vehicle technology. Volkswagen, which six years ago confessed to rigging its diesel cars to conceal illegally high emissions, [has since outlined plans](#) to spend tens of billions of dollars to build six battery factories, install a global network of charging stations and roll out more than 80 new electric models by 2025.

Nicolai Laude, a Volkswagen spokesman, said while the German automaker was committed to a rapid shift toward electric vehicles, it did not join the new pledge because the global nature of its business meant it had to be mindful that “regions developing at different speed combined with different local prerequisites need different pathways” to zero emissions.

Toyota, the world’s best-selling automaker in 2020, was also notably missing from the list of signatories, though it announced plans this year to sell 15 electric vehicle models around the world by 2025. The Japanese automaker [has been more cautious on electric vehicle technology](#), continuing to bet on alternatives like hydrogen-powered fuel cell vehicles.

Toyota did not immediately comment.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Households carry record amounts of debt</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/09/economy/fed-household-debt-inflation/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/09/economy/fed-household-debt-inflation/index.html</a>
GIST	<p><b>New York (CNN Business)</b><a href="#">American households</a> are carrying record amounts of debt as home and auto prices surge, Covid infections continue to fall and people get out their credit cards again.</p> <p>Between July and September, US household debt climbed to a new record of \$15.24 trillion, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York said Tuesday.</p> <p>It was an increase of 1.9%, or \$286 billion, from the second quarter of the year.</p> <p>"As <a href="#">pandemic relief</a> efforts wind down, we are beginning to see the reversal of some of the credit card balance trends seen during the pandemic," such as lower spending in favor of paying down debt balances, said Donghoon Lee, research officer at the New York Fed.</p> <p>Now that the stimulus sugar rush has worn off, consumers are going back to their old ways of spending with their credit cards. Credit card balances rose by \$17 billion, just as they had during the second quarter. But they're still \$123 billion lower than at the end of 2019 before the pandemic hit.</p> <p><a href="#">Mortgages</a>, which are the largest component of household debt, rose by \$230 billion last quarter and totaled \$10.67 trillion.</p> <p>Auto loans and student loan balances also increased, rising by \$28 billion and \$14 billion, respectively. Even though credit card debt has yet to get back to its pre-pandemic level, total debt is already \$1.1 trillion higher than at the end of 2019.</p> <p><b>High spending spurred by even higher inflation</b></p>



Americans are spending big at the moment. Economists' explanation is, for the most part, "because they can".

With the labor market recovery chugging along and the worker shortage driving up wages, people's wallets are getting filled ahead of the holidays.

That's a good thing, because everything is getting more expensive.

Inflation is sitting at multi-year highs thanks to supply chain disruptions that have increased the costs of shipping and raw materials. At the same time, consumer demand is also going through the roof.

The [latest inflation data](#) from early Tuesday showed prices producers receive for their products rose 0.6% in October, adjusted for seasonal swings, or 8.6% over the preceding 12-month period. Much of the increase was due to higher energy costs.

Businesses can only absorb so much of the increase in prices before passing the higher costs down to end-consumers.

Stripping out energy and food prices, as well as trade services, the producer price index rose a seasonally adjusted 0.4% last month, or 6.2% over the 12-month period.

The price index tracking intermediate demand -- that's goods and services sold to businesses -- for processed goods jumped 2.1%, its biggest advance since May, mostly driven by higher energy costs.

Over the 12-month period ended October, the index has climbed 25.4%, the biggest increase since January 1975.

Consumer price inflation, which tracks prices paid for food, housing and the like in October is due Wednesday morning.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Uncertainty: OSHA vaccine rule on hold</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/biden-vaccine-mandate-injunction-companies-compliance/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/biden-vaccine-mandate-injunction-companies-compliance/</a>
GIST	<p>Businesses across the U.S. are facing uncertainty over the <a href="#">Biden administration's new vaccine rule</a> after a federal appeals court on Saturday <a href="#">temporarily halted the regulation</a>. But legal experts say companies subject to the requirement should plan on complying with the 490-page order or risk being caught unprepared — and potentially face costly fines — if the rule moves forward.</p> <p>"They should continue to prepare," said Julie Vanneman, an attorney with Dentons Cohen &amp; Grigsby, where she works on environmental and health and safety matters. "It's possible that the stay will be continued and the regulations won't actually be in effect as of December 6, which is the deadline for compliance for most of the rules, but it's possible they could go forward."</p> <p>The Biden administration on Monday argued in a legal filing that the new requirement for businesses with more than 100 employees should remain on track because postponing it could "cost dozens or even hundreds of lives per day." In the meantime, employment attorneys say they are fielding questions from clients about how to interpret the regulation as well as the significance of the legal challenges facing it.</p> <p>"We are definitely getting questions, and we say, 'You should be planning,' and by that I mean you should be thinking about which policy option you want," said Vanneman, who declined to speculate on the potential outcome of court challenges to the rule.</p> <p>She added, "Employers don't want to be in the situation where they aren't in compliance and don't have time to get ready — there are a lot of steps that need to be taken by December 6."</p>



Prudence "suggests that employers begin preparing for compliance while keeping an eye on the legal challenges," added John Ho, a labor and employment attorney and co-chair of the OSHA department with law firm Cozen O'Connor.

It's also unclear if Saturday's ruling — made by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals — applies nationally or only to the Fifth Circuit, which covers Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, noted Amy Traub, chair of BakerHostetler's national labor and employment group.

### **Pick a policy by December 5**

Under the Biden, employers with more than 100 employees must decide on a COVID-19 policy — whether that means requiring workers to be fully vaccinated or to undergo weekly testing — within 30 days of the rule's [publication](#) in the Federal Register on November 5. That means companies must have a written policy in place by December 5 and effective on December 6.

By January 4, those businesses must implement their designated policy. The so-called "[emergency temporary standard](#)" (ETS) was requested by President Joe Biden as part of his September COVID-19 [action plan](#) and will be overseen by the Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Companies that delay implementing a policy — and tracking the vaccination or testing status of their employees — could face costly fines if they miss those deadlines. OSHA could fine businesses almost \$14,000 for each employee who fails to comply with the rule, while businesses that are deemed in "willful violation" of the requirements could face additional fines of about \$136,000.

A willful violation is "you knew what you were doing and you knew how to be in compliance, and knew you weren't going to do it," Vanneman noted.

### **Next legal steps**

Meantime, the government's vaccine order will be working its way through the legal system. All legal challenges filed before November 15 will be consolidated before a single federal circuit court, which will be picked by lottery among the 13 circuit courts, Traub explained.

"At that time, all proceedings will be ruled upon, including whether a previous grant or denial of a temporary stay issued by any of the federal circuit courts will stand," she noted. "That federal circuit court will also determine — subject to potential Supreme Court review — whether OSHA had the authority to issue the ETS."

However, Traub added that it's impossible to know how the legal dispute will play out, as well as how quickly the case will proceed.

On Monday, Biden administration lawyers said there is no reason to keep the vaccine mandate on hold while the court where the cases ultimately land remains undetermined. Besides, they argued, no employee will have to get a shot to comply until early December.

White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre expressed confidence that the [COVID-19](#) vaccine mandate can withstand the legal challenges.

"This is an authority that we believe the Department of Labor has," Jean-Pierre told reporters during a news briefing. "We are very confident about it."

### **"A crushing blow"**

Businesses are also facing questions about the new requirements, especially when it comes to testing employees for the coronavirus.

OSHA isn't requiring employers to pay for weekly COVID-19 tests for unvaccinated workers, which means that some workers may end up shouldering the test costs. But some state and local regulations may

require employers to pay for such tests, while unions may also have collective bargaining agreements that say otherwise.

And employers are struggling with other questions, such as who pays for the time required for an unvaccinated worker to get tested, Vanneman noted.

"The result is that if you are unvaccinated as of January 4, you are likely going to be required to pay for the cost of the tests," she said. "That might be quite burdensome for a lot of people."

One business called the OSHA rule a "crushing blow to employers." New Hampshire business owner Kathy Garfield, whose family has run manufacturing firm Keller Companies for three generations, said her company brought in a vaccination van to serve employees and gave workers paid time off to get the shots — but only about half have done so.

"How can I run a business when I have no talent?" Garfield asked at a news conference with Governor Chris Sununu, a Republican.

Garfield also said it's [difficult](#) to find a place to get a COVID-19 test. When they are available, they can cost \$200. The cost of the tests may push some workers to look for employment at a smaller company that doesn't have to abide by the OSHA rule, she added.

"That's the difference between eating and starving," Garfield said. "So what are these employees going to do? They're going to go to another employer with less than 100 employees."

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HEADLINE	11/09 Thanksgiving meal planning? Shop early
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/thanksgiving-shoppers-may-not-find-everything-on-their-grocery-list/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/thanksgiving-shoppers-may-not-find-everything-on-their-grocery-list/</a>
GIST	<p>Americans already bracing themselves for the strain of forking over more money for their Thanksgiving feasts are now being told to be ready to make substitutions. The reason? <a href="#">Supply-chain headaches</a> could make it hard to find everything on your grocery list.</p> <p>Stocks of food and other household basics are less ample than usual, thanks in part to global supply disruptions that are also driving <a href="#">up food prices</a>. Meanwhile, consumers are shopping earlier this year for the holiday meal, moving up the usual timetable by several weeks.</p> <p>"Turkeys, pies, stuffing mixes — these are things people are buying early," Krishnakumar Davey, president of client engagement at IRI, a provider of purchasing, social and other data, told CBS MoneyWatch. "If you're finicky about what you use, you might not be able to get it."</p> <p>In supermarkets, stocks of whole-bird turkeys were running at 39% as of October 31, while a quarter of grocery store vegetable aisles were out of sweet potatoes and yams, according to IRI's rundown. Aerosol whipped toppings were more readily available, with an in-stock rate of 88%, and cranberry sauce can be found in eight out of every 10 stores, on average, IRI found.</p> <p>One of the country's largest suppliers of cranberry sauce, Ocean Spray, has acknowledged supply-chain troubles, including a shortage of core materials and transportation issues. "While we do not anticipate significant impacts, consumers may experience some availability issues at times," a spokesperson for the 700-farm cooperative told CBS MoneyWatch in an email.</p> <p>Frozen pies and pastry shells are also potential trouble spots, with in-stock rates at 83% and 81%, respectively, according to IRI. Overall, in-stock rates are running at roughly 80%, about 10 percentage points below usual. That shouldn't cause consumers to rush to the store, but it might mean not waiting around in hopes of finding a deal.</p> <p>"If you're waiting for a promotion, don't," Davey advised.</p>

### Early shopping advised

Limited, and pricier, supplies come as more people plan to play host this Thanksgiving. Nearly one in three, or 37%, of adults plan to have 10 or more family and friends over for the holiday this year, according to a recent Instacart/Harris [poll](#) of nearly 5,000 adults.

About half of those hosting, or at least bringing a dish, are concerned about getting all the ingredients. Nearly a third said they planned to start buying what they needed before the end of October, the surveys found.

"To ensure you're able to get everything you need on your Thanksgiving shopping list, we strongly recommend starting your grocery shopping earlier than usual this year," Laurentia Romaniuk, Instacart's trends expert, [stated](#) in a news release. "We recommend that people start shopping for their non-perishable and frozen ingredients in early November and load up on fresh ingredients as far out from the Thanksgiving holiday as feasible."

All that said, those looking to get their turkey fresh from the farm could be out of luck.

### Major run on turkeys

Thanksgiving turkeys are [officially sold out](#) at Hurd Farm, a 700-bird outfit in Hampton, New Hampshire. And, while it's not unusual to have run out of turkeys by early November, but demand is running far higher than normal, owner Stephen Hurd told CBS MoneyWatch. "I'm having a lot more people calling and asking for it."

This year's "turkey season has been like no other," according to Pounds Turkey Farm in Leechburg, Pennsylvania. "Orders have come in at an incredible pace and based upon our estimations we are already sold out of fresh turkey and breast items. This generally happens in mid-November, Not October," the farm [stated](#) on its website.

"We have suspended taking orders right now," Beverly Pounds of Pounds Turkey Farm in Leechburg, Pennsylvania, told the local [CBS affiliate](#) in Pittsburgh. The farm is selling a total of about 7,000 birds, most of them weighing between 10 and 12 pounds, she said.

Turkey production was down 2.4% through September from the year-ago period, and increasing hatchings to meet a rebound in demand has proved slow. That's up 2% in August and 1% in September after declining 4.2% during the first seven months of the year, according to a recent [report](#) by Steiner Consulting Group.

"The rebound in hatchery output will not be soon enough to boost turkey production significantly for Thanksgiving but should be available for the Christmas market," the Steiner analysts noted. The turkey industry moved more whole birds into cold storage between July and October than in any year since 2009, with the increased frozen supplies spelling minimal problems for the December holiday, they added.

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HEADLINE	11/09 App offers support veterans mental health
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/sound-off-app-veterans-mental-health/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/sound-off-app-veterans-mental-health/</a>
GIST	<p>Bethesda, Maryland — Bill Mulder was one of the nation's most decorated Navy SEALs. His wife, Sydney Mulder, said he was a great father and dedicated to his SEAL team.</p> <p>"Bill was incredibly proud," she said. "He loved his job."</p> <p>But after a grueling mission to Afghanistan in 2009, Mulder said her husband changed. He was angry, he started drinking excessively and didn't want any help.</p>

"He felt if he opened up and if he were honest and truthful, he would jeopardize his career," Mulder said. "I'll get kicked out. I'll lose my security clearance."

Six months after he left the Navy, he called his wife on FaceTime and put a gun to his head.

"And I said, 'You're scaring me. I'm scared.' And I heard a gunshot and I saw what I saw. And then the phone — it went black. And I threw the phone on the ground," Mulder said.

Nearly 20% of service members who have returned from Afghanistan and Iraq have post-traumatic stress disorder or depression, according to a RAND Corporation study. But only half who need treatment actually seek it. The Department of Veterans Affairs said each day 17 veterans take their own lives.

At the time of her husband's suicide, Mulder's brother, William Negley, a former CIA officer, was developing Sound Off, an app that would let those who serve reach out for help anonymously. It uses encryption to protect the conversations, Negley said.

John, who asked to remain anonymous, is one of the veterans who downloaded the app, which put him in touch with a therapist.

"I do think the Sound Off app saved my life," said John, whose team cleared roadside bombs in Afghanistan. "If a soldier or a service member wishes to advance their career and stay in the service to seek mental help I think is a barrier still."

Negley said the app has helped 200 veterans and he wants to expand.

Four years after her husband's death, Mulder still wears the watch he had on when he died. His wedding ring is clipped to it. She said it's a reminder that her family is still healing.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/10 China maintains zero tolerance policy</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/living-virus-china-tolerance-81075892">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/living-virus-china-tolerance-81075892</a>
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan -- Wang Lijie planned to spend three days in the Gobi Desert last month to take in the area's famous poplar forest as its trees turned a golden yellow.</p> <p>Instead, the Beijing resident has been stuck for more than three weeks, much of it in quarantine, after authorities discovered a cluster of COVID-19 cases in a nearby city. He was among more than 9,000 tourists who became trapped in Ejin Banner, a remote part of China's Inner Mongolia region that is in the Gobi.</p> <p>As vaccination rates rise in many parts of the world and even countries that previously had strict COVID-containment strategies gingerly ease restrictions, China is doubling down on its zero-tolerance policy.</p> <p>China pioneered that approach — of strict lockdowns, multiple rounds of mass testing and centralized quarantine — during the world's first major outbreak of the coronavirus in Wuhan. And it continues now, even as it says it has fully vaccinated 77% of its 1.4 billion people and started giving booster shots.</p> <p>"The cost is truly rather high, but compared with not managing it, relaxing (the zero-tolerance policy), then that cost is even higher," Zhong Nanshan, a top government doctor, said in a recent TV interview.</p> <p>The impact of the restrictions is not widespread — but unpredictable. Unlucky travelers can find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time, like the tourists in the Gobi Desert, some of whom were bused 18 hours to finish their quarantine in another city. People from Beijing have complained online about leaving for a work trip and not being able to return home.</p>

In a sign of the effect the regulations can have even on thriving businesses, the wildly popular hotpot restaurant chain, Haidilao, decided to shutter 300 outlets in part because of the pandemic and is scaling back a plan to add 1,200 new ones. The strain has been particularly felt in places like Ruili, a city in the southwest that has been locked down repeatedly this year.

But for authorities in Beijing, control over the virus has become a point of pride, a potent tool of propaganda — and proof, they say, of a superior form of governance. They often trumpet their success at keeping deaths relatively low, especially in contrast to the United States, whose COVID-19 response the Foreign Ministry spokesman has called a “total failure.”

China has reported about 4,600 deaths — compared to more than 755,000 in the U.S., a country with less than a quarter the population.

“It’s becoming part of the official narrative that promotes that approach and links that to the superiority of the Chinese political system,” said Yanzhong Huang, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

It’s impossible to tell how much popular support the policies have since opinion polls are rare and criticism often censored. When Zhang Wenhong, a doctor in Shanghai who has been compared to top American health official Anthony Fauci, briefly raised the prospect of living with the virus, he was shut down by official criticism and a plagiarism investigation.

But the head of China’s Center for Disease Control, Gao Fu, recently suggested the country could open up once it is 85% vaccinated — a sign the government is aware that at least some are eager for that.

In the last three and a half weeks, Wang has had 18 tests for COVID-19. Yet, he isn’t complaining. He’s able to work remotely and has started a vlog of his daily life, interacting with residents of Inner Mongolia online.

“Regardless of the time you sacrificed, or how much money you spent, in the face of life, in front of health, those things are not worth mentioning,” said Wang. “For everyone’s health, for society to be more stable, some people have to make sacrifices.”

But China’s strategy sets it apart, as many countries shift to trying to live with the virus, especially as it continues to mutate and vaccines cannot fully prevent infection. Most notably, New Zealand, which had long pursued a zero-tolerance approach, announced last month a cautious plan to ease restrictions, despite a simmering outbreak. Australia, Thailand and Singapore — all of which imposed severe travel restrictions for much of the pandemic — have also begun to open their borders.

China, by contrast, slashed the number of international passenger flights allowed into the country by 21% last month to 408 flights per week until late March, while increasing the number of cargo flights by 28%.

In Singapore, which started allowing quarantine-free entry to fully vaccinated travelers from certain countries, the number of new cases has jumped to thousands a day from less than 100 before. But most are not winding up in the hospital.

“It’s just completely unrealistic to think that you can stay at zero,” said Dale Fisher, a professor in the National University of Singapore’s medical school.

But even if only a small percentage of infected people end up in hospitals, that could be a problem in China, with its huge population — and would be especially complicated for a government that has staked its reputation on keeping numbers very low.

“I think what the government leaders, and scholars and public health officials are worried about (is), even a small opening may lead to bigger outbreaks on a much larger scale,” said Huang, of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Some of the most dramatic examples of China's policy come from Ruili, which is bordered on three sides by Myanmar and has struggled to keep the virus at bay.

Videos of a 21-month-old boy with round cheeks who has been tested 78 times have circulated widely online. The boy's father declined an interview but confirmed he shot the videos, which have inspired empathy, but have also been used by state media as propaganda to show how tough Chinese citizens are.

One Ruili resident, who gave only his last name Xu, said he's lost count of how many tests he's taken. At the height of one lockdown, community volunteers threatened to fine him when he went to throw out the trash.

To leave the city, he must pay for seven days of hotel quarantine — just go to a town 10 kilometers (6 miles) away. The restrictions have devastated his business, which sells jade from Myanmar.

The Ruili government announced in late October that it would give 1,000 yuan (about \$150) to residents who had experienced hardship, and that it would allow small- and medium-sized businesses to defer loan payments.

In the Xinjiang region in China's west, Li Hui has been sealed up for about a month in the city of Yili, where a few cases were discovered in early October.

His mother, who lives in a nearby village, twisted her wrist, but initially could not come into the city for treatment because of the restrictions. After much pleading, he got an ambulance to take her to a hospital a week after her injury. He still can't visit her.

"I don't know how long Yili's residents can endure," he said. "I really can't endure it anymore."

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Food banks struggle to feed hungry: prices</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/us-food-banks-struggle-feed-hungry-amid-surging-81075720">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/us-food-banks-struggle-feed-hungry-amid-surging-81075720</a>
GIST	<p>OAKLAND, Calif. -- U.S. food banks already dealing with increased demand from families sidelined by the pandemic now face a new challenge — surging food prices and supply chain issues walloping the nation.</p> <p>The higher costs and limited availability mean some families may get smaller servings or substitutions for staples such as peanut butter, which costs nearly double what it did a year ago. As holidays approach, some food banks worry they won't have enough stuffing and cranberry sauce for Thanksgiving and Christmas.</p> <p>"What happens when food prices go up is food insecurity for those who are experiencing it just gets worse," said Katie Fitzgerald, chief operating officer of Feeding America, a nonprofit organization that coordinates the efforts of more than 200 food banks across the country.</p> <p>Food banks that expanded to meet unprecedented demand brought on by the pandemic won't be able to absorb forever food costs that are two to three times what they used to be, she said,</p> <p>Supply chain disruptions, lower inventory and labor shortages have all contributed to increased costs for charities on which tens of millions of people in the U.S. rely on for nutrition. Donated food is more expensive to move because transportation costs are up, and bottlenecks at factories and ports make it difficult to get goods of all kinds.</p> <p>If a food bank has to swap out for smaller sizes of canned tuna or make substitutions in order to stretch their dollars, Fitzgerald said, it's like adding "insult to injury" to a family reeling from uncertainty.</p>

In the prohibitively expensive San Francisco Bay Area, the Alameda County Community Food Bank in Oakland is spending an extra \$60,000 a month on food. Combined with increased demand, it is now shelling out \$1 million a month to distribute 4.5 million pounds (2 million kilograms) of food, said Michael Altfest, the Oakland food bank's director of community engagement.

Pre-pandemic, it was spending a quarter of the money for 2.5 million pounds (1.2 million kilograms) of food.

The cost of canned green beans and peaches is up nearly 9% for them, Altfest said; canned tuna and frozen tilapia up more than 6%; and a case of 5-pound frozen chickens for holiday tables is up 13%. The price for dry oatmeal has climbed 17%.

On Wednesdays, hundreds of people line up outside a church in east Oakland for its weekly food giveaway. Shiloh Mercy House feeds about 300 families on those days, far less than the 1,100 families it was nourishing at the height of the pandemic, said Jason Bautista, the charity's event manager. But he's still seeing new people every week.

"And a lot of people are just saying they can't afford food," he said. "I mean they have the money to buy certain things, but it's just not stretching."

Families can also use a community market Shiloh opened in May. Refrigerators contain cartons of milk and eggs while sacks of hamburger buns and crusty baguettes sit on shelves.

Oakland resident Sonia Lujan-Perez, 45, picked up chicken, celery, onions bread and potatoes — enough to supplement a Thanksgiving meal for herself, 3-year-old daughter and 18-year-old son. The state of California pays her to care for daughter Melanie, who has special needs, but it's not enough with monthly rent at \$2,200 and the cost of milk, citrus, spinach and chicken so high.

"That is wonderful for me because I will save a lot of money," she said, adding that the holiday season is rough with Christmas toys for the children.

It's unclear to what extent other concurrent government aid, including an expanded free school lunch program in California and an increase in benefits for people in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, will offset rising food prices. An analysis by the Urban Institute think tank in Washington, D.C. found that while most households are expected to receive sufficient maximum benefits for groceries, a gap still exists in 21 percent of U.S. rural and urban counties.

Bryan Nichols, vice president of sales for Transnational Foods Inc., which delivers to more than 100 food banks associated with Feeding America, said canned foods from Asia— such as fruit cocktail, pears and mandarin oranges— have been stuck overseas because of a lack of shipping container space.

Issues in supply seem to be improving and prices stabilizing, but he expects costs to stay high after so many people got out of the shipping business during the pandemic. "An average container coming from Asia prior to COVID would cost about \$4,000. Today, that same container is about \$18,000," he said.

At the Care and Share Food Bank for Southern Colorado in Colorado Springs, CEO Lynne Telford says the cost for a truckload of peanut butter —40,000 pounds (18,100 kilograms)—has soared 80% from June 2019 to \$51,000 in August. Mac and cheese is up 19% from a year ago and the wholesale cost of ground beef has increased 5% in three months. They're spending more money to buy food to make up for waning donations and there's less to choose from.

The upcoming holidays worry her. For one thing, the donation cost to buy a frozen turkey has increased from \$10 to \$15 per bird.

"The other thing is that we're not getting enough holiday food, like stuffing and cranberry sauce. So we're having to supplement with other kinds of food, which you know, makes us sad," said Telford, whose food



	<p>bank fed more than 200,000 people last year, distributing 25 million pounds (11.3 million kilograms) of food.</p> <p>Alameda County Community Food Bank says it is set for Thanksgiving, with cases of canned cranberry and boxes of mashed potatoes among items stacked in its expanded warehouse. Food resourcing director Wilken Louie ordered eight truckloads of frozen 5-pound chickens—which translates into more than 60,000 birds—to give away free, as well as half-turkeys available at cost.</p> <p>For that, Martha Hasal is grateful.</p> <p>“It’s going to be an expensive Thanksgiving, turkey is not going to cost like the way it was,” said Hasal as she loaded up on cauliflower and onions on behalf of the Bay Area American Indian Council. “And they’re not giving out turkey. So thank God they’re giving out the chicken.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/10 Germany: new daily high number of cases</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/germany-reports-daily-high-number-coronavirus-cases-81077905">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/germany-reports-daily-high-number-coronavirus-cases-81077905</a>
GIST	<p>BERLIN -- Germany's national disease control center reported a record-high number of new coronavirus cases Wednesday as one of the country's top virologists warned that another lockdown would be needed if vaccinations do not quickly accelerate.</p> <p>The 39,676 cases registered by the Robert Koch Institute surpassed the previous daily record of 37,120 new cases reported Friday. The institute said Germany's infection rate rose to 232.1 new cases per 100,000 residents over the past seven days.</p> <p>“We have a real emergency situation right now,” Christian Drosten, the head of virology at Berlin’s Charite Hospital, said regarding the situation at many hospital intensive care units across the country. “We have to do something right now.”</p> <p>Government officials have repeatedly said they do not intend to impose lockdowns and have instead appealed to residents to get vaccinated.</p> <p>Germany currently has a caretaker national government following a September federal election. The parties that are expected to form the next government plan to introduce legislation this week that would allow a declaration since March 2020 of an “epidemic situation of national scope” to expire at the end of the month and provide a new legal framework for instituting coronavirus measures.</p> <p>As during other periods of the pandemic, the country has a patchwork of regional rules. Most places restrict access to many indoor facilities and events to people who have been vaccinated against the virus, have recovered from COVID-19 or recently received negative test results - with the latter category now excluded in some areas. However, the rules are often laxly enforced.</p> <p>Several hospitals have said in recent days that they are again working at their limits and have ICUs so full of COVID-19 patients that they cannot admit new patients at the moment.</p> <p>Berlin's Charite said Tuesday it had to cancel planned surgeries due to the number of staff members caring for people with COVID-19. Authorities have said most of latest patients are unvaccinated.</p> <p>About 67% of Germany's population of 83 million is fully vaccinated, according to official figures. Unlike in some other European countries, the government has balked at making vaccines mandatory for any professional group.</p> <p>Drosten said he expects “a very strenuous winter” if vaccinations don’t pick up quickly.</p>

	<p>“We probably need to control infection activity again through contact measures - not probably, but certainly,” he said.</p> <p>"We're in a bad situation: we have 15 million people who could have been vaccinated and should have been vaccinated," Drosten said.</p> <p>Since the start of the pandemic, 96,963 people have died of COVID-19 in Germany, according to official figures.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 APEC pledges vaccines, carbon; tensions</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/apec-finds-agreement-vaccines-carbon-tensions-remain-81072020">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/apec-finds-agreement-vaccines-carbon-tensions-remain-81072020</a>
GIST	<p>WELLINGTON, New Zealand -- Making coronavirus vaccines more accessible and reducing carbon emissions were two key pledges that Pacific Rim senior officials could agree to Wednesday.</p> <p>But what went unstated were the deep tensions that run through the unlikely group of 21 nations and territories that include the U.S., China, Taiwan, Russia, and Australia. Those tensions have raised questions about who can join a Pacific trade deal and whether the U.S. will get to host a future round of meetings.</p> <p>Trade ministers met online over two days as part of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. It is being hosted by New Zealand in a virtual format due to the pandemic. The officials highlighted areas where they could find agreement ahead of a leader's meeting later in the week.</p> <p>New Zealand Trade Minister Damien O'Connor said after the meeting that the members had committed, as they did last year, to jointly fighting the pandemic.</p> <p>“We all know that none of us are safe until we are all safe,” O'Connor said, adding that 17 APEC members "have either lowered or completely removed tariffs on vaccines and related products, making them easier to access.”</p> <p>In a joint statement, the ministers agreed to accelerate vaccine manufacturing and supply efforts and to support global sharing of vaccines. They also said they would study ways to ensure people could travel safely within the region to boost business, tourism and education.</p> <p>New Zealand's Foreign Affairs Minister, Nanaia Mahuta, said APEC members strongly supported global climate commitments.</p> <p>“We know that there is a role for APEC to play in combating climate change,” she said. “It was for this reason that ministers agreed to send a strong signal on the importance of halting further spending on fossil fuel subsidies.”</p> <p>When asked about tensions between APEC members, the two New Zealand ministers said it had not been a point of discussion.</p> <p>“There will always be differences between some of the member economies, but those differences are left for other forum,” O'Connor said.</p> <p>Both Taiwan and China have applied to join a Pacific Rim trade pact, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, with Beijing saying it will block Taiwan's bid on the basis that Taiwan refuses to accept that it's part of China.</p> <p>And it remains unclear whether all APEC members will support a bid by the U.S. to host the 2023 round of APEC meetings.</p>

	<p>Mahuta said Wednesday that APEC was founded on consensus and that there was not yet a confirmed host for 2023.</p> <p>“We are hopeful that we will get there,” she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Climate talks: little time, ‘mountain to climb’</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/diplomatic-cavalry-rides-climate-talks-resolve-gaps-81051547">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/diplomatic-cavalry-rides-climate-talks-resolve-gaps-81051547</a>
GIST	<p>GLASGOW, Scotland -- The United Nations climate summit in Glasgow has made “some serious toddler steps” toward cutting emissions but far from the giant leaps needed to limit global warming to internationally accepted goals, two new analyses and top officials said Tuesday.</p> <p>And time is running out on the two weeks of negotiations.</p> <p>The president of the climate talks, Alok Sharma, told high-level government ministers at the U.N. conference to reach out to their capitals and bosses soon to see if they can get more ambitious pledges because “we have only a few days left.”</p> <p>This month's summit has seen such limited progress that a United Nations Environment Programme analysis of new pledges found they weren't enough to improve future warming scenarios. All they did was trim the “emissions gap” — how much carbon pollution can be spewed without hitting dangerous warming levels— a few tenths of a percentage point, according to the review released Tuesday.</p> <p>The analysis found that by 2030, the world will be emitting 51.5 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide each year, 1.5 billion tons less than before the latest pledges. To achieve the limit first set in the 2015 Paris climate accord, which came out of a similar summit, the world can only emit 12.5 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases in 2030.</p> <p>A separate analysis by independent scientists found a slight decrease in future warming, but one still insufficient to limit the warming of the planet to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century. The planet has already warmed 1.1 degrees (2 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times.</p> <p>“There’s some serious toddler steps,” United Nations Environment Programme Director Inger Andersen said in an interview with The Associated Press a few minutes after the U.N. analysis was finished. “But they are not the leaps we need to see, by any stretch of the imagination.”</p> <p>In Glasgow, officials touted advances, but not necessarily success.</p> <p>“We are making progress,” Sharma said, “but we still have a mountain to climb over the next few days, and what has been collectively committed to goes some way, but certainly not all the way, to keeping 1.5 within reach.”</p> <p>Andersen acknowledged that none of the three main U.N. criteria for success for the two-week climate talks has been achieved so far. They are cutting greenhouse gas emissions by about half by 2030; securing \$100 billion a year in aid from rich countries to poor nations; and having half of that money be for for developing nations to adapt to global warming’s worst harms.</p> <p>The second analysis by Climate Action Tracker, which for years has monitored nations’ emission-cutting pledges, said based on those submitted targets the world is now on track to warm 2.4 degrees Celsius (4.3 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times by the end of this century. That’s a far cry from the 2015 Paris climate deal overarching limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees) and its fallback limit of 2 degrees Celsius.</p>

Given what's been pledged "we are likely to be in that area 2.4 degrees, which is still catastrophic climate change and far, far away from the goals of the Paris Agreement," said climate scientist Niklas Hohne of the New Climate Institute and the Climate Action Tracker.

Hohne's group, independent of the U.N., also looked at how much warming there would be if other less firm national promises were put into effect. If all the submitted national targets and other promises that have a bit of the force of law are included, future warming drops down to 2.1 degrees.

And in the "optimistic scenario" if all the net-zero pledges for mid-century are taken into account, warming would be 1.8 degrees, Hohne said. That's the same figure as the International Energy Agency came up with for that optimistic scenario.

Andersen said success is about her great-grandchildren living in a world with warming kept to the level outlined in the Paris accord and that "the kids on the street" protesting in Glasgow help the United Nations in pushing negotiators to do more.

"Progress happens at meetings. Success is delivered into people's lives when their livelihoods and their health and well-being is improved," Andersen told the AP.

U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who brought her climate-celebrity star power to the U.N. climate talks on Tuesday along with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, told reporters she had a message for those youth protesters: "Stay in the streets. Keep pushing."

As "high level" ministers try to forge a deal by Friday, they have a big gap to bridge. Or more accurately, multiple gaps: there's a trust gap, a wealth gap and a north-south gap based on money, history and future threats.

On one side of the gap are nations that developed and became rich from the Industrial Revolution fueled by coal, oil and gas that started in the U.K. On the other side are the nations that haven't developed yet and haven't gotten rich and are now being told those fuels are too dangerous for the planet.

The key financial issue is the \$100 billion a year pledge first made in 2009. The developed nations still haven't reached the \$100 billion a year mark. This year, the rich nations increased their aid to just shy of \$80 billion a year, still short of what was promised.

"Everybody here is livid," said Saleemul Huq, a climate science and policy expert who is director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development in Bangladesh

Huq said it's more than just the money, it's important to bridge the gap in trust between rich nations and poor nations.

"They reneged on their promise. They failed to deliver it," Huq said. "And they seem not to care about it. And, so why should we trust anything they say anymore?"

Andersen and Sharma still hold out hope.

"We're not done yet. We still have a couple of days," Andersen said. "And so we're certainly from our side, from the United Nations side, we're going to try to hold everyone's feet to the fire."

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Alaska battle: conservation, local economy</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/battle-rages-conservation-local-economy-alaska/story?id=81062700">https://abcnews.go.com/US/battle-rages-conservation-local-economy-alaska/story?id=81062700</a>
GIST	Tongass National Forest stretches across nearly 17 million acres of land in southeast Alaska and is home to a lush vibrant ecosystem. It is now also at the center of a bitter battle between those trying to save the old growth forests and those who say access more of it is critical for the local economy.

Tongass covers more than 80% of southeast Alaska and, according to the United States Department of Agriculture, is responsible for sequestering nearly 8% of all U.S. carbon emissions.

Global leaders have pledged for decades to end deforestation by 2030, but some Alaskan corporations are asking for the opposite and want more access to the forest to support the local economy.

"Where's your Amazon boxes going to come from? American consumers still want this stuff. We're producing it here. It's a good job for us people, good jobs for Alaskans," said Eric Nichols, the owner of Alcan Alaska Timber Corporation.

Southeast Alaska relies heavily on tourism, and took a major economic blow during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nichols, who said he's had to downsize his company by half because of logging restrictions, said the timber industry is a way to bring consistent jobs back to the area.

"How do you raise a family on \$15 an hour for a five-month job?" said Nichols. "How do I do that? I can't do that. My kids can't do that."

Wanda Culp, a Tlingit native, is also worried about the future of this land and her family, but said that the natural forest is critical to their lifestyle. Her tribe has deep ties to the land.

"We depend on this wilderness as Indigenous people," said Culp.

She noted that her people have used the forest as a natural resource for generations, but that the commercial "clearcutting" method of deforestation is disrespectful and unsustainable.

"We don't just cut it down and let it land; we create a spot for it to land so it doesn't split. So it's worthwhile. That isn't what happens with clear cuts. It's total disrespect," said Culp, who flew to Washington, D.C., in 2019 to protest large-scale deforestation in southeast Alaska.

In the late 1900s, the timber industry and forest clearcutting was prominent in southeast Alaska with nearly a million acres of the Tongass forest chopped down.

Bryce Dahlstrom of Viking Lumber supports clearcutting trees and likened it to any type of farming done across the country.

"It's a crop that grows back," said Dahlstrom. "If you don't want a farmer to cut his corn down, don't eat corn."

In January 2001, just days before leaving office, President Bill Clinton enacted the Roadless Rule, which aims to preserve roadless areas by preventing road construction, as well as timber harvesting, on more than 9 million acres in the Tongass National Forest.

Since then, presidential administrations have gone back and forth on whether to keep or dismiss the rule, citing a variety of political reasons. For now, the rule remains in place.

Alaska Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy has said between wood and minerals, there is untapped natural wealth in Alaska inhibited by the restriction.

"We're the largest state in the country by far. This forest is larger than most states. There's incredible opportunity to provide lumber and lumber products for the United States and possibly other parts of the world. This is an opportunity for us to do it here again and provide jobs, revenue and wealth," said Dunleavy.

Many scientists say the health of the planet cannot be sacrificed for economic growth anymore, especially in places like Tongass, which are "carbon sinks" that help combat rising carbon emissions.

In 2020, 111 scientists from across the country wrote a letter to Biden asking him to permanently install protections in Tongass and create a strategic carbon reserve system.

Despite the restrictions from the Roadless Rule, Tongass is the last national forest that allows large-scale clearcut logging of ancient old-growth trees. Some argue it's not an issue because trees can be replanted.

"[Trees] are a renewable resource. We cut trees down because there's a demand for that product," said Nichols.

But conservationist Meredith Trainor disagrees. She said the older the trees, the more effective they are at removing carbon dioxide and that an entire forest cannot be replaced so easily.

"There is no one tree scenario where we're going to solve climate change, right? This is about managing a whole forest or a certain way," said Trainor. "It's the whole system that works together to sequester carbon and old growth is much more effective at doing that than young growth."

The timber industry in southeast Alaska is only allowed to work in 2% of Tongass. Loggers like Nichols argue that's not enough.

He wants to expand access even further, potentially giving loggers access to an additional half a million acres.

"I want enough to have an industry. We need about 5, maybe 6%, to continue to have a continuous industry up here," said Nichols.

Scientists argue that the whole Alaskan ecosystem is connected. They believe that expanding the logging industry may have a negative effect on the region's other largest employment sector: commercial fishing.

In Sitka, Alaska, an island town of about 8,000, they rely heavily on salmon fisheries. Fisherman Marsh Skeele said that the expansion of logging puts fishermen's livelihoods at risk.

"[Logging] damages streams and lakes -- freshwater ecosystems that salmon rely on, that fishermen rely on, that this community relies on," said Skeele. "They're kind of ignoring all the jobs that are tied to what exists already."

Dunleavy said that it's imperative to look at Alaska for all its potential and that doesn't necessarily mean change is bad for the future of the state.

"There's this narrative that's trying to be pushed that if you touch Alaska, you will damage it permanently and ruin it. That's not the case. It's not the case at all," said Dunleavy.

While some believe expanding access to Tongass National Forest could help more people than it could harm, a tug-of-war continues in southeast Alaska between the environment and the economy.

As for Culp, she said that the climate crisis is an issue that cannot be ignored any longer.

"We are in a serious, serious climate crisis. Why can't we start repairing our habitat?" said Culp. "Why can't we protect what we have? I want my great-granddaughter to be able to walk this land and breathe this fresh air, touch these trees, know who they are. It's not much to ask."

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HEADLINE	11/09 Lawsuits Houston music festival pile up
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/lawsuits-astroworld-organizers-travis-scott-pile/story?id=81034235">https://abcnews.go.com/US/lawsuits-astroworld-organizers-travis-scott-pile/story?id=81034235</a>

Several lawsuits have been filed so far against several parties connected to the deadly stage surge during [Astroworld Festival at NRG Park](#) in Houston, Texas, which left at least eight concertgoers dead and many more injured.

Astroworld is a music festival founded by rapper Travis Scott and held annually in Houston. This year was the third Astroworld event, which hosted popular rappers and singers including SZA, Bad Bunny, Chief Keef and Tame Impala.

According to Houston Police and witness accounts, a wave of tens of thousands of people surged toward the stage when Scott -- and later, rapper Drake -- appeared. Concert attendees say they were pushed into one another from all sides, and as the crowd pressed its way forward, some began to fall, pass out and get trampled by others in the audience.

"You're not moving yourself -- it's more of the crowd moving you, so you don't have control of your body at that point," said concertgoer Fatima Muñoz, who shared her experience with ABC News' daily news podcast "Start Here." "So when people start falling and losing their balance, it kind of becomes like a domino effect."

"Somebody next to me started falling, and he kind of took me down with him. And that's when I had fell right on the floor, and that's when everybody started tumbling down, and I tried so hard to get up," Muñoz said. "There's just too much people like on me, like, they legit dog-pile on me. I was on the floor. Nobody helped. I tried screaming for my life. I tried screaming for help. Nobody helped nobody."

Muñoz said she bit someone's leg to bring attention to her laying on the floor and then two attendees helped her up and out of the crowd.

"If those two guys didn't help me, I mean, I really could have been one of those people for sure," she said.

The lawsuits, along with some witness accounts, allege that Scott continued to perform [despite the presence of emergency vehicles in the audience](#).

Houston police say the investigation is active and in its early stages.

#### **Lawsuits stack up against concert producers, venue**

Live Nation Entertainment and ScoreMore Holdings, two concert production and entertainment companies that organized and produced the event, are being sued, as well as performers Scott and Drake. NRG Park's venue management and operation agency, the Harris County Sports & Convention Corporation, is also included as a defendant in the lawsuits.

The family of 21-year-old Axel Acosta, one of the people who died in the crowd surge, say they plan on joining a lawsuit as part of 35 total plaintiffs in a case to be filed against the aforementioned organizers by Houston attorney Tony Buzbee.

Buzbee also cited a 2015 [disorderly conduct charge against Scott](#) at the Lollapalooza music festival in Chicago, which he pleaded guilty to when he urged attendees to ignore security, ABC7 Chicago reported at the time.

"Certainly neither Travis Scott nor his handlers, entourage managers, agents, hangers on promoters, organizers or sponsors cared enough about Axel to make even minimal effort to keep him and the others at the concert safe," Buzbee said in a press conference with the family Monday.

Civil rights attorney Ben Crump is also representing a 21-year-old attendee who helped lift people up from the floor amid the chaos in another lawsuit that accuses the event's organizers and Scott of negligence in providing medical equipment, crowd control, safety precautions, adequate hiring and training of staff.



"We are hearing horrific accounts of the terror and helplessness people experienced -- the horror of a crushing crowd and the awful trauma of watching people die while trying unsuccessfully to save them," Crump said in a statement to ABC News. "We will be pursuing justice for all our clients who were harmed in this tragic and preventable event."

Texas attorney Thomas J. Henry also filed a lawsuit against Scott and Drake, as well as Live Nation and NRG Stadium, on behalf of one of the surviving victims following Friday night's tragedy.

Henry said he believes a message needs to be sent to "performers, venues and event organizers that a lackadaisical approach to event preparation and attendees safety is no longer acceptable."

"Live musical performances are meant to inspire catharsis, not tragedy," Henry said in a statement sent to ABC News. "Many of these concertgoers were looking forward to this event for months, and they deserved a safe environment in which to have fun and enjoy the evening. Instead, their night was one of fear, injury and death."

Kherkher Garcia, LLP has also filed a lawsuit against event organizers and Scott on behalf of an attendee who the firm said "suffered serious bodily injuries when the uncontrolled crowd at the concert knocked him to the ground and trampled him."

"He and those who promoted and supported this concert must take responsibility for their heinous actions," Kherkher Garcia, LLP said in a statement to ABC News. "We intend to hold them fully accountable by showing that this behavior will not be tolerated in our great city."

Houston attorney Ricardo Ramos told reporters Tuesday night he plans to file a lawsuit on behalf of as many as 30 concertgoers over alleged injuries and emotional distress, though the defendants are still being determined.

"They went there to have a good time, and they went there to have some fun," Ramos said. "In return, probably it was the biggest nightmare they have ever experienced."

### **Scott and organizers react**

Following the concert, Scott released a statement on the tragedy on Twitter, saying, "I'm absolutely devastated by what took place last night. My prayers go out to the families and all those impacted by what happened at Astroworld festival."

Scott announced he will cover the funeral costs and further aid to individuals affected by the tragedy and will refund all of the Astroworld concertgoers and ticket holders. He has also said he is cooperating with investigators.

Drake on Monday night posted a [statement on Instagram](#). "I've spent the past few days trying to wrap my mind around this devastating tragedy. I hate resorting to this platform to express an emotion as delicate as grief but this is where I find myself. My heart is broken for the families and friends of those who lost their lives and for anyone who is suffering," he wrote. "I will continue to pray for all of them, and will be of service in any way I can. May God be with you all."

In a statement to ABC News, Live Nation said it was working with law enforcement to get answers.

"We continue to support and assist local authorities in their ongoing investigation so that both the fans who attended and their families can get the answers they want and deserve, and we will address all legal matters at the appropriate time," Live Nation said.

On Instagram, Scott's girlfriend, Kylie Jenner, who attended the concert, defended Scott.

"I want to make it clear we weren't aware of any fatalities until the news came out after the show and in no world would have continued filming or performing," Jenner wrote in her post.

Legal analysts, including civil litigation attorney Danielle Cohen Higgins and [ABC News' Dan Abrams](#), say there are many questions that need to be answered about what exactly happened at the festival.

Higgins said event organizers are going to have to answer for the safety precautions, crowd control procedures and other policies that play a big role in event planning.

"If Live Nation created an environment where they reasonably should have anticipated that a surge was possible -- that's a problem for Live Nation. They are the experts in creating this environment," Higgins said in an interview with ABC News.

NRG Park representatives declined ABC News' request for comment.

Higgins and Abrams also pointed out that in 2019, [three people were also hospitalized at Astroworld](#) after being trampled when thousands of people rushed to get into the event.

Following that 2019 incident, [Houston police tweeted](#): "We are successfully working together to support Houston's biggest music festival @astroworldfest at @nrgpark and collaborating closely with the festival to ensure the public safety of everyone attending the event. We look forward to a memorable night."

Abrams, when asked on Good Morning America about what stands out to him the most about this tragedy, said any of Scott's actions and comments at the concert could affect these cases.

"There's going to be social media videos of every moment of that show," Abrams said. "Every single second will have been documented, so we'll know exactly what he said and when he said it."

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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	11/09 Survey: average ransomware payment \$6M
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.zdnet.com/article/average-ransomware-payment-for-us-victim-more-than-6-million-mimecast/">https://www.zdnet.com/article/average-ransomware-payment-for-us-victim-more-than-6-million-mimecast/</a>
GIST	<p>A <a href="#">new report</a> from Mimecast has found that the US leads the way in the size of payouts following ransomware incidents.</p> <p>In the "State of Ransomware Readiness" study from Mimecast, researchers spoke with 742 cybersecurity professionals and found that 80% of them had been targeted with ransomware over the last two years.</p> <p>Of that 80%, 39% paid a ransom, with US victims paying an average of \$6,312,190. Victims in Canada paid an average of \$5,347,508 while those in the UK paid nearly \$850,000. Victims in South Africa, Australia, and Germany all paid less than \$250,000 on average.</p> <p>More than 40% of respondents did not pay any ransom, and another 13% were able to negotiate the initial ransom figure down.</p> <p>Of the 742 experts who spoke to Mimecast, more than half said the primary source of ransomware attacks came from phishing emails with ransomware attachments, and another 47% said they originated from "web security." Phishing emails that led to drive-by downloads were also a highly-cited source of ransomware infections.</p> <p>Less than half of respondents said they have file backups that they could use in the event of a ransomware attack, and almost 50% said they needed bigger budgets to update their data security systems.</p>

Despite the lack of backups, 83% of those surveyed said they could "get all their data back without paying the ransom." Another 77% of executives said they believed they could get their company back to normal within two days following a ransomware incident. This confused Mimecast researchers, considering nearly 40% of respondents admitted to paying ransoms.

A number of respondents called for more training and more information-sharing about threats.

"Ransomware attacks have never been more common, and threat actors are improving each day in terms of their sophistication and ease of deployment," [said](#) Jonathan Miles, head of strategic intelligence & security research at Mimecast. "Preparation is key in combating these attacks. It's great to see cybersecurity leaders feel prepared, but they must continue to be proactive and work to improve processes. This report clearly shows ransomware attacks pay, which gives cybercriminals no incentive to slow down."

Ransomware incident costs stretch far beyond the ransom itself; 42% of survey respondents reported a disruption in their operations, and 36% said they faced significant downtime. Almost 30% said they lost revenue, and 21% said they lost customers.

Another cost? Almost 40% of the cybersecurity professionals surveyed said they believed they would lose their jobs if a ransomware attack was successful.

Two-thirds of respondents said they would "feel very or extremely responsible if a successful attack occurred. When asked why, almost half said it would be because they "underestimated the risk of a ransomware attack."

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HEADLINE	<b>11/08 Spyware providers flock to int'l arms fairs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cyberscoop.com/spyware-nato-arms-fairs-atlantic-council/">https://www.cyberscoop.com/spyware-nato-arms-fairs-atlantic-council/</a>
GIST	<p>European and Middle Eastern spyware and surveillance firms are marketing intrusion software to adversaries of the U.S., its intelligence allies and NATO, <a href="#">Atlantic Council research published Monday</a> reveals.</p> <p>Looking at more than 200 companies that attended international arms fairs in the past two decades, researchers found that 85% of companies likely selling interception or intrusion technologies marketed these capabilities to governments outside their home country — even when no intelligence relationship existed. Five companies, including Israel-based Cellebrite and Sweden-based Micro Systemation AB, marketed those capabilities to U.S. and NATO adversaries.</p> <p>“Cellebrite’s Digital Intelligence technology is used lawfully and with a warrant to help federal government agencies and law enforcement, including Five Eyes member nations, to investigate an event after it has taken place,” a Cellebrite spokesperson told CyberScoop in an email. “The report is inaccurate and misleading regarding how it positions Cellebrite.”</p> <p>Cellebrite does not sell to countries on the “[Financial Action Task Force]’s blacklist or under sanction by the United States, Israel or the broader international community,” the spokesperson wrote.</p> <p>MSAB did not respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>The findings coincide with an explosion of surveillance vendors attending international arms trade shows, including the heavily attended Milipol France and the U.K. -based Security and Policing Home Office.</p> <p>The report underscores growing concerns about the threat that spyware companies pose to the United States and its allies. U.S. and European leaders have begun to <a href="#">follow human rights organizations</a> in vocalizing opposition to firms like the <a href="#">NSO Group</a>, whose spyware technology has been used by authoritarian regimes to spy on dissidents and journalists.</p>

“These vendors are increasingly looking to foreign governments to hawk their wares, and policymakers have yet to sufficiently recognize or respond to this emerging problem,” researchers Winnona DeSombre, Lars Gjesvik and Johann Ole Willers write. “Any cyber capabilities sold to foreign governments carry a risk: these capabilities could be used against individuals and organizations in allied countries, or even in one’s home country.”

Those risks aren’t hypothetical. The data on arms fair attendance collected by researchers included U.S. contractor CyberPoint, the precursor to DarkMatter, which was the [subject of U.S. law enforcement](#) after it designed cyber capabilities for the United Arab Emirates that led to spying on U.S. citizens.

The report provides one of the broadest overviews of the intrusion and surveillance industry to date, but the researchers note that it is likely far more firms exist. They say that because they were searching in English, “the dataset woefully underreports the presence of Chinese companies in this space.”

Researchers at the think tank urged U.S. and NATO forces to tighten export controls on the technology and work with arms fairs to limit attendance by companies that sell their technology to authoritarian or adversarial governments.

The United States [took a major step](#) against spyware Wednesday when the Commerce Department added Israel-based NSO Group and spyware firm Candiru to its list of companies that pose a national security risk to the United States. NSO Group has protested the U.S. decision. On Friday, [three House Democrats called on](#) the Biden administration to take even further action to limit investors from democratic countries from investing in hack-for-hire companies.

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HEADLINE	11/09 New flaws used in ransomware attacks
SOURCE	<a href="https://threatpost.com/12-new-flaws-used-in-ransomware-attacks-in-q3/176137/">https://threatpost.com/12-new-flaws-used-in-ransomware-attacks-in-q3/176137/</a>
GIST	<p>A dozen new vulnerabilities were used in ransomware attacks this quarter, bringing the total number of bugs associated with ransomware to 278. That’s a 4.5 percent increase over Q2, according to researchers.</p> <p>Five of the newbies can be used to achieve remote code execution (RCE), while two can be used to exploit web apps and launch denial-of-service (DoS) attacks. That’s never good news, but it’s particularly teeth-grinding given that this quarter also saw distributed DoS (DDoS) attacks <a href="#">shatter records</a>, according to a separate study.</p> <p>The news about the new vulnerabilities that have been pounced on by ransomware operators comes from Ivanti’s Q3 2021 ransomware index spotlight report, <a href="#">published</a> on Tuesday and conducted with Cyber Security Works and Cyware.</p> <p>Aaron Sandeen, Cyber Security Works CEO, said in a press release that Q3 was a copy-paste of the ransomware trends from the rest of the year. Namely, “We continued to see ransomware attacks aggressively increase in sophistication and frequency in Q3.”</p> <p><b>The Early Bird Gets the Worm</b></p> <p>The quarterly ransomware analysis also found that ransomware groups are still finding and exploiting zero-day weaknesses, before CVEs are hatched and patched. Case in point: The much-reviled <a href="#">REvil</a> ransomware gang found and exploited flaws in Kaseya VSA software as the company’s security team was still working on a trio of patches.</p> <p>On July 2, the <a href="#">REvil gang wrenched open</a> the three zero-days in Kaseya’s Virtual System/Server Administrator (VSA) platform in <a href="#">more than 5,000 attacks</a>. As of July 5, the worldwide assault had been unleashed in 22 countries, reaching not only Kaseya’s managed service provider (MSP) customer base but also, given that many of them use VSA to manage the networks of other businesses, clawing at those MSPs’ own customers.</p>

### **Ransomware Numbers Creep Up on All Fronts**

The third quarter also saw nine new vulnerabilities with lower severity ratings being associated with ransomware. Also, the Q3 ransomware index update for 2021 identified ransomware groups expanding their attack arsenal with 12 new vulnerability associations in Q3,

### **Riding Brand-New Bugs, Bearing Shiny New Toys**

Q3 analysis also identified five new ransomware families, bringing the total to 151. The new ransomware groups were quick to jump on some of the most dangerous vulnerabilities out there just weeks after they began to trend in the wild, such as [PrintNightmare](#), [PetitPotam](#) and [ProxyShell](#).

The techniques being used in ransomware attacks are also getting more sophisticated. One example cited in Ivanti's analysis is dropper as-a-service – a service that allows technically non-savvy/criminally inclined actors to distribute malware through dropper programs that can execute a malicious payload onto a victim's computer.

Another is trojan-as-a-service, also known as malware-as-a-service: a service that lets anyone with an internet connection rent customized malware services, allowing them to acquire, implement and cash in on the service, all on the cloud with zero installation.

All bad things seem to be rentable: [Ransomware-as-a-service \(RaaS\)](#), for example, is fueling the spread of ransomware, sparing crook wannabes the need to tangle with code.

### **Old Wine, New Ransomware Bottles**

The report also found that three vulnerabilities dating to 2020 or earlier became newly associated with ransomware in Q3 2021, bringing the total count of older vulnerabilities associated with ransomware to 258: a whopping 92.4 percent of all vulnerabilities tied to ransomware.

The analysis pointed to the [Cring](#) ransomware group being a notable example: The gang [targeted](#) two older ColdFusion vulnerabilities – CVE-2009-3960 and CVE-2010-2861 – that have been patched for 11 years.

Srinivas Mukkamala, Ivanti's senior vice president of security products, said in a [press release](#) that automation can save your bacon: "It's critical that organizations take a proactive, risk-based approach to patch management and leverage automation technologies to reduce the mean time to detect, discover, remediate, and respond to ransomware attacks and other cyber-threats."

Anuj Goel, Cyware CEO, was quoted as saying yes to the automation, and also to intel sharing to protect organizations from ransomware: "This research underscores that ransomware is continuing to evolve and is becoming more dangerous based on the catastrophic damage it can inflict on target organizations. What is more complex for many organizations is the inability of vertical industries to rapidly share specific IOC's irrespective of their industry, in a way that is easy to curate, operationalize and disseminate to take action before an attack hits.

"Managing organizational risk means companies should be looking to a collective defense strategy to have continuously visibility into the attack and risk surfaces respectively, to reduce huge losses to reputation, customers, and finances. The more that cyber teams can tie into IT automation and processes, the better and more efficient they'll be in countering ransomware."

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HEADLINE	11/09 HSI cyber investigations, engagement
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/vulnerability-management/this-dhs-component-you-havent-heard-of-is-scanning-critical-infrastructure-for-bugs">https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/vulnerability-management/this-dhs-component-you-havent-heard-of-is-scanning-critical-infrastructure-for-bugs</a>
GIST	When policymakers and the public think about the government interfacing with industry and critical infrastructure to tackle cyber threats, their mind usually jumps to agencies like the NSA, FBI and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

But the truth is that many smaller and lesser-known agencies also play a role engaging with the broader public to investigate cyber enabled crimes and help close off damaging IT vulnerabilities.

One such agency, Homeland Security Investigations, is not widely known outside of DHS but acts as its principal investigative arm on a wide range of issues, including cyber enabled crime, money laundering, financial crime and financial fraud, child exploitation, narcotics smuggling, transnational gangs, human smuggling, human trafficking, counterproliferation, intellectual property rights, trade fraud and other areas.

At the InfoSec World security conference this week hosted by SC Media parent company CyberRisk Alliance, Patrick Lechleitner, acting deputy director for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, touted a number of threat intelligence initiatives that HSI has stood up over the last year to investigate cybercrime and proactively engage with industry and critical infrastructure.

One program, called Operation Cyber Centurion, was originally started as a local initiative in the San Diego HSI field office. It was designed to scan the internet-facing assets of critical infrastructure entities for known vulnerabilities and engage with them on remediation efforts, hopefully before it's been actively exploited.

According to Lechleitner, the program was so successful that HSI decided to expand it to other offices and components.

"We recognize the great work by HSI San Diego, and have now used that great work, brought it into our headquarters element and are now expanding the scope of that to be a global program," he said. "Once vulnerabilities are detected, HSI San Diego and our Cyber Crimes Center develop lead packages that are then shared with HSI field offices to implement threat mitigation measures and perform incident response activities to prevent, mitigate and disrupt cyber attacks."

Lechleitner said these kinds of programs allow agencies like HSI to engage with critical infrastructure entities proactively and minimize the impact of what could otherwise turn into a bad breach. As an example, he cited an engagement by the Detroit HSI field office with Tenet Healthcare over a potential compromise that HSI detected in the provider's public-facing IT network. The unnamed vulnerability had been the subject of public reporting and was highlighted in an alert from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, but the Tenet had installed only temporary patches and "light" intrusion detection systems.

"After HSI Detroit's additional alert, Tenet Healthcare agreed that their efforts to secure their network was not enough, given the identification by HSI of continued vulnerabilities in their network," said Lechleitner. Experts in healthcare IT and security say the use of partial or temporary by organizations is commonplace. As SC Media's Jessica Davis [reported](#) earlier this year, some IT security teams can remain at their workstations and apply the patch to all devices on the network with the click of a button, but in healthcare nearly all patches require the security team to physically touch every device in need of mitigation.

For example, Samantha Jacques, vice president of clinical engineering at McLaren Health Care, said her IT security team has a list of 15 separate processes they must follow when a vulnerability is disclosed, and many hospitals and healthcare providers must balance the need to quickly patch with the need to keep life-saving devices and technology running.

"The simplicity in that idea, that patching is a panacea solution from a security perspective, is just off. We can't patch everything. We don't have any ability to monitor and say, 'all of this stuff needs to be patched' to reduce the risk we have," said Jacques. "We just end up balancing the risk the best we can."

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HEADLINE	11/09 Healthcare, OT systems exposed to attacks
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/many-healthcare-ot-systems-exposed-attacks-nucleus13-vulnerabilities">https://www.securityweek.com/many-healthcare-ot-systems-exposed-attacks-nucleus13-vulnerabilities</a>



GIST	<p>A series of 13 vulnerabilities identified in the Nucleus TCP/IP stack could be exploited to execute code remotely, cause a denial of service condition, or to obtain sensitive information, enterprise device security firm Forescout warns.</p> <p>Collectively referred to as <a href="#">NUCLEUS:13</a>, the issues likely affect safety-critical devices, such as anesthesia machines, patient monitors and other types of devices used in healthcare. Other types of operational technology (OT) systems are also impacted.</p> <p>The most important of the newly identified issues is CVE-2021-31886 (CVSS score of 9.8), a stack-based buffer overflow that exists because the FTP server fails to properly validate the length of the “USER” command. An attacker could exploit the vulnerability to cause a denial of service (DoS) condition or to achieve remote code execution.</p> <p>Two other similar issues in the FTP server (related to the improper validation of the length of the “PWD/XPWD” and “MKD/XMKD” commands) were assessed with a severity rating of high.</p> <p>Of the remaining bugs, nine are considered high severity and could be exploited to leak sensitive information or cause DoS conditions. The last issue in the set is a medium-severity bug in the ICMP that could be exploited to send ICMP echo reply messages to arbitrary network systems.</p> <p>Some of these vulnerabilities, Forescout explains, were addressed in existing versions of the Nucleus TCP/IP stack, yet they were never issued CVE identifiers. Patches are available for all 13 security holes.</p> <p>Developed by Accelerated Technology, Inc. (ATI) in 1993, Nucleus NET, the TCP/IP stack in the Nucleus real-time operating system (RTOS), is now owned by Siemens. Over its 28-year life, Nucleus has been deployed in devices across several verticals, including healthcare, automotive, and industrial systems.</p> <p>The official Nucleus website claims the RTOS is deployed on over 3 billion devices, but Forescout believes that most of these are, in fact, components such as chipsets and baseband processors. The researchers say they were able to find only thousands of potentially vulnerable devices connected to the Internet and that the healthcare sector appears to be affected the most.</p> <p><a href="#">Siemens has also published advisories</a> describing the impact of the vulnerabilities on its own products.</p> <p>Organizations are advised to identify within their environments all devices that are running Nucleus and apply the available patches or mitigations as soon as possible, as well as to ensure proper network segmentation is enforced. They should also monitor network traffic to identify any malicious packets and disable FTP/TFTP if not needed, or use switch-based DHCP control mechanisms.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Microsoft: zero-days under attack</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/zero-days-under-attack-microsoft-plugs-exchange-server-excel-holes">https://www.securityweek.com/zero-days-under-attack-microsoft-plugs-exchange-server-excel-holes</a>
GIST	<p>Microsoft on Tuesday pushed out patches for at least 55 documented security vulnerabilities in a wide range of products and called urgent attention to a pair of flaws that have already been exploited in the wild.</p> <p>Microsoft said the two under-attack vulnerabilities exist in Microsoft Exchange Server and Microsoft Excel, two widely deployed products in the Windows ecosystem.</p> <p>“We are aware of limited targeted attacks in the wild using one of vulnerabilities (<a href="#">CVE-2021-42321</a>), which is a post-authentication vulnerability in Exchange 2016 and 2019,” <a href="#">Redmond acknowledged</a>, noting that the issue affects on-premises Microsoft Exchange Server, including servers used by customers in Exchange Hybrid mode.</p>



Microsoft slapped a “critical” rating on the Exchange Server bug and warned that an authenticated attacker can launch code execution attacks. The company did not share details on the pre-patch attacks beyond crediting multiple Chinese researchers for the discovery.

“Our recommendation is to install these updates immediately to protect your environment,” the company said.

The second zero-day was flagged in the popular Microsoft Excel productivity tool and is described as a “feature bypass vulnerability” that allows code execution via specially crafted spreadsheets. Microsoft said the Excel bug -- [CVE-2021-42292](#) -- is being actively exploited but did not provide any additional details.

The Excel vulnerability affects Microsoft Office for macOS but patches for Apple’s platform are not yet available.

The Microsoft Patch Tuesday updates also include fixes for serious flaws affecting Azure, Microsoft Edge, Windows Defender, Visual Studio and multiple Windows components.

Six of the 55 security bulletins from Microsoft are rated “critical,” Microsoft's highest severity rating. Four of the 55 bugs are listed as publicly known.

The Patch Tuesday releases also included [patches from software maker Adobe](#) to cover at least four security defects that expose users to malicious hacker attacks.

The most serious of the flaw was addressed in RoboHelp Server and is rated “critical” because it exposes corporate environments to arbitrary code execution attacks.

Adobe warned that the vulnerability -- [CVE-2021-39858](#) -- affects RoboHelp Server RHS2020.0.1 and earlier versions on the Microsoft Windows platform. The company said it was unaware of any exploits in the wild targeting this flaw.

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HEADLINE	11/09 TeamTNT targets Docker servers
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/teamtnt-hackers-target-your-poorly-configured-docker-servers/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/teamtnt-hackers-target-your-poorly-configured-docker-servers/</a>
GIST	<p>Poorly configured Docker servers and being actively targeted by the TeamTNT hacking group in an ongoing campaign started last month.</p> <p>According to a report by researchers at TrendMicro, the actors have three distinct goals: to install Monero cryptominers, scan for other vulnerable Internet-exposed Docker instances, and perform container-to-host escapes to access the main network.</p> <p>As illustrated in an attack workflow, the attack starts with creating a container on the vulnerable host using an exposed Docker REST API.</p> <p>TeamTNT then uses compromised, or actor-controlled Docker Hub accounts to host malicious images and deploy them on a targeted host.</p> <p>TrendMicro has seen over 150,000 pulls of images from the malicious Docker Hub accounts as part of this campaign.</p> <p>Next, the dropped container executes cronjobs and fetches various post-exploitation and lateral movement tools, including container escaping scripts, credential stealers, and cryptocurrency miners.</p>

When scanning for other vulnerable instances, the threat actors check ports 2375, 2376, 2377, 4243, 4244, which has been observed in past DDoS botnet campaigns.

The actors also attempt to collect server info such as the OS type, architecture, number of CPU cores, container registry, and the current swarm participation status.

The container image that is created is based on the AlpineOS system and is executed with flags that allow root-level permissions on the underlying host.

Finally, the IP address that is used for TeamTNT's current infrastructure (45[.]9[.]148[.]182) has been associated with multiple domains that served malware in the past.

### **Previous campaign laid the groundwork**

TrendMicro reports that this campaign also uses compromised Docker Hub accounts controlled by TeamTNT to drop malicious Docker images.

Using compromised Docker Hub accounts makes the distribution points more reliable for the actors, as they are harder to map, report, and takedown.

The actors were spotted collecting Docker Hub credentials in a previous campaign analyzed by TrendMicro [in July](#) when credentials stealers were deployed in attacks.

"Our [July 2021 research](#) into TeamTNT showed that the group previously used credential stealers that would rake in credentials from configuration files. This could be how TeamTNT gained the information it used for the compromised sites in this attack," explains [TrendMicro's research](#) published today.

As such, TeamTNT demonstrates a high level of operational planning, being organized and purposeful in their goals.

### **Permanent threat to Docker systems**

TeamTNT is a sophisticated actor that constantly evolves its techniques, shifts short-term targeting focus but remains a constant threat to vulnerable Docker systems.

They first created a worm to [exploit Docker and Kubernetes](#) en masse back in August 2020.

In October 2020, the actors [added Monero mining](#) and credential-stealing capabilities, targeting Docker instances.

In January 2021, TeamTNT upgraded its miners with [sophisticated detection evasion tricks](#) while still harvesting user credentials from the compromised servers.

Docker provides some "mandatory" tips that can be used lock down Docker's REST API and prevent these types of attacks.

"Therefore it is *mandatory* to secure API endpoints with [HTTPS and certificates](#). It is also recommended to ensure that it is reachable only from a trusted network or VPN," explains Docker's [security guide](#).

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HEADLINE	11/09 Mexico first arrest Pegasus spying scandal
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/09/mexico-pegasus-nso/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/09/mexico-pegasus-nso/</a>
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY — Mexican authorities have made their first arrest in the global spy scandal surrounding the malware Pegasus, jailing a technician who worked for a private firm on allegations he was involved in illegally tapping the phone of a broadcast journalist.</p> <p>Police detained the man on Nov. 1, and a Mexico City judge ordered him imprisoned while the investigation continues, according to a <a href="#">statement from the federal Justice Ministry</a>. Local media</p>

identified him as Juan Carlos García, a former employee of Proyectos y Diseños VME, part of the KBH business group.

Authorities did not identify the journalist who was surveilled. But Carmen Aristegui, a well-known investigative reporter, disclosed Tuesday that the case involved the tapping of her phone in 2015 and 2016.

Pegasus is a product of NSO Group, an Israeli firm that says it licenses the malware to governments to pursue terrorists, drug traffickers and other criminals. The company says it carefully screens its clients and cuts off those who abuse the software. But the [U.S. Commerce Department recently blacklisted the Israeli firm](#), saying its spyware had been used by governments to “maliciously target” politicians, journalists, activists, academics and others.

Asked for reaction to the Mexico arrest, NSO said its products “are only sold to vetted and approved government entities, and cannot be operated by private companies or individuals.”

“We regret to see that, over and over again, the company’s name is mentioned in the media in events that have nothing to do with NSO,” the company said in a statement.

García did not enter a plea, and it was not possible to locate his lawyer on Tuesday. Uri Ansbacher, the head of KBH, which is no longer in business, has denied any involvement in illegal spying.

Phone-tapping in Mexico exploded in recent years, with new technology permitting the expansion of decades-old practices rooted in the country’s authoritarian past, according to analysts and former officials.

Mexico’s government has acknowledged spending millions of dollars to acquire Pegasus for its Justice Ministry and domestic spy agency, the CISEN, but says it ended such contracts in 2017.

Nongovernmental groups [identified signs of the NSO spyware](#) in the phones of 26 Mexican journalists, activists and politicians between 2015 and 2017, triggering outrage.

What’s unusual about García’s arrest is that he worked not for the government but for a private firm that licensed the spyware on behalf of NSO Group, according to prosecutors. “We tentatively believe that he’s the person who operated the system [in Mexico] and could be of great importance to the investigation,” said Ricardo Sánchez Pérez del Pozo, a prosecutor, speaking on Aristegui’s daily radio program.

The allegation raises the possibility that business executives were involved in a parallel spy network “for their own gain, but in coordination with senior Mexican officials,” said Leopoldo Maldonado, the Mexico director for Article 19, a press freedom group that has supported Aristegui.

Aristegui says her [phone was infected by Pegasus](#) in 2015, after she and a team of reporters broke a story about a suspicious real estate deal involving the wife of then-President Enrique Peña Nieto. Aristegui’s son, then 16, and one of her colleagues were also targeted, according to an [investigation by Citizen Lab](#), a technology research center at the University of Toronto, and several Mexican nongovernmental groups.

Further questions about abuse of Pegasus emerged this summer, in an investigation by The Washington Post and 16 media partners that found signs of the spyware in attempted and successful hacks of 37 smartphones belonging to journalists, human rights activists and businesspeople around the world. Their numbers appeared on a list of more than 50,000 phones concentrated in countries known to have been clients of NSO. Nearly one-third of the numbers were in Mexico.

Journalists found that the list included numbers for scores of top Mexican politicians, as well as for union representatives, journalists and civic activists. Forbidden Stories, a Paris-based journalism nonprofit organization, and Amnesty International, a human rights group, had access to the list and

	shared it with the news organizations. NSO said the numbers were “not a list of Pegasus targets or potential targets.”
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Facebook allows stolen content to flourish?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-stolen-content-copyright-infringement-facebook-files-11636493887?mod=hp_lead_pos6">https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-stolen-content-copyright-infringement-facebook-files-11636493887?mod=hp_lead_pos6</a>
GIST	<p>Facebook has allowed plagiarized and recycled content to flourish on its platform despite having policies against it, the tech giant’s researchers warned in internal memos.</p> <p>About 40% of the traffic to Facebook pages at one point in 2018 went to pages that stole or repurposed most of their content, according to a research report that year by Facebook senior data scientist Jeff Allen, one of a dozen internal communications reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. Pages are used by businesses and organizations to disseminate content on Facebook, while individual users put content on what Facebook calls “profiles.”</p> <p>The researchers also wrote Facebook has been slow to crack down on copyright infringement for fear of opening itself to legal liability.</p> <p>“What’s the easiest (lowest effort) way to make a big Facebook Page?” Mr. Allen wrote in an internal slide presentation the following year. “Step 1: Find an existing, engaged community on [Facebook]. Step 2: Scrape/Aggregate content popular in that community. Step 3: Repost most popular content on your Page.”</p> <p>Mr. Allen, who left Facebook in late 2019, wrote that Facebook pages seeking big followings simply had to ask one question of the content they were considering recirculating: “Has it gone viral in the past?”</p> <p>Posting unoriginal content continues to be a formula for success on Facebook, according to data the company has released this year on the platform’s most popular posts.</p> <p>Company researchers said the tactic is an effective way to build a large audience on Facebook and has been used by foreign and domestic groups that post divisive content and peddle false information on social media.</p> <p>“This is the basic game plan used by many bad actors,” Mr. Allen wrote in his 2019 presentation. The data scientist even coined a label for this intentional distribution of unoriginal content: “manufactured virality.”</p> <p>The prevalence of such content makes it harder for Facebook’s legitimate content partners, including news outlets, to get visibility on the platform, researchers said in the documents. <a href="#">Courting content creators is a strategic focus for the company.</a></p> <p>Mr. Allen said in the research reports that Facebook wasn’t as aggressive as <a href="#">Alphabet</a> Inc.’s YouTube in proactively policing copyright violations on its platform—meaning before rights holders alerted them—because it feared doing so would invite lawsuits. He said that comes from how Facebook interpreted the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, an intellectual-property law.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Facebook Files is a Wall Street Journal project</a> based on reporting that includes reviews of a cache of documents and data. The documents offer an unprecedented look at <a href="#">Facebook’s struggles to manage the products</a> and <a href="#">systems at the heart of its business success.</a></p> <p>Andy Stone, a spokesman for Facebook, a unit of Meta Platforms Inc., said the company has taken steps to address the issues Mr. Allen and his colleagues raised, including removing fake accounts and reducing distribution of unoriginal news reporting.</p>

“These working documents from years ago show our efforts to understand these issues and don’t reflect the product and policy solutions we’ve implemented since,” Mr. Stone said, emphasizing that the results were preliminary.

In May, Facebook began reporting for the first time the number of copyright violations it said [it identified and removed proactively](#), saying at the time the company had been building the technology to do so “over the past few years.”

Facebook’s penalties for posting unoriginal content aren’t great enough to meaningfully discourage the practice, employees familiar with how the company ranks content say.

Mr. Stone said Facebook limits the distribution of unoriginal content but doesn’t remove it and that it can still reach a large audience.

### **Top 20 list**

The success of recycled or plagiarized material on Facebook was visible in a list the company released of the best-performing posts and links on the platform in the second quarter of this year.

Of the top 20 posts, 15 were copied outright or repurposed from other Facebook pages or social networks such as Reddit and [Twitter](#), one post was deleted and only four were completely original pieces of content, according to an analysis of the Facebook list written by Mr. Allen for the Integrity Institute.

He co-founded the group, which aims to study and address the social harms of internet platforms, this year after an earlier stint as a data scientist for the Democratic National Committee. [Platformer, a tech newsletter, earlier reported on the institute’s findings](#).

The top-20 content that was plagiarized or repurposed in the second-quarter report was mostly light fare. One post was from a social-media influencer who asked whether sugar belongs in spaghetti, just days after comedian Steve Harvey tweeted the same question. Mr. Allen said the same tactic was used by Russia’s Internet Research Agency to build the audience that allowed it to meddle in the 2016 U.S. election.

Facebook’s integrity researchers who studied the activities of Russia and other foreign players after the election found that one of the most common tactics was to populate Facebook pages with lots of unoriginal content.

On Tuesday, Facebook released a similar report for the third quarter that showed the same pattern, with at least as many of the top-20 posts copied or repurposed from other sources, according to an analysis by the Journal.

In a September 2018 memo looking across the broader Facebook pages ecosystem, Mr. Allen found that nearly 40% of traffic went to pages with primarily unoriginal content. Only 20% of traffic went to legitimate publishers of original content, while 40% went to pages operated by businesses, Mr. Allen found.

He argued that Facebook could tackle the problem with an army of people who could assign quality ratings to pages on factors such as whether they tended to post original content. As an experiment to prove his approach, he assembled a team that rated some 20,000 pieces of content.

In early tests of the system, high scorers included Bloomberg Opinion and Complex Music, while lower scorers included a page called Fishing Boats that wasn’t about boats, Mr. Allen wrote in an internal presentation.

In another memo, Mr. Allen wrote that posting unoriginal content wasn’t just an audience building technique for Russia’s IRA and troll farms—[organized groups that meddle in political discourse](#). It was also a tactic used by [U.S.-based purveyors of false information](#), he wrote. Mr. Allen proposed a potential solution to the problem: reducing the reach of pages whose posts always seemed to go viral.

Researchers focused on the potential harm to legitimate publishers. “These Pages peddle commodity viral content, and legitimate creators and small businesses are struggling against the weight of it all,” one researcher wrote in a memo.

### Analyzing incentives

A September 2019 memo from another integrity team member included a chart showing that certain publishers such as Western Journal got far more clicks per employee than established brands such as USA Today, Univision, Fox News or the [New York Times](#). The researcher posited that outlets that weren’t making much original content were being given an advantage by Facebook’s systems.

“They mostly just take content already circulated by other reports and re-spin it into a new story,” he wrote of Western Journal. “Without the incentives in place to reward good journalism, low quality journalism flourishes.” The [Washington Post earlier reported some aspects of the September 2019 memo](#).

George Upper, the editor-in-chief of Western Journal, called the memo’s description a “mischaracterization of The Western Journal’s content,” adding that “much of what we have published over the years has been completely original” and “most of what we publish is commentary and opinion.”

In a farewell memo upon leaving Facebook, Mr. Allen explored the legal reasons that unoriginal content is flourishing, zeroing in on the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. [MIT Technology Review previously reported on the farewell memo](#).

The law gives internet companies like Facebook a “safe harbor,” or immunity from copyright infringement, if they act promptly to take down or block access to infringing content. But if they have a process to proactively identify potentially infringing content and make the wrong judgment about whether a piece of content is indeed infringing, leaving it up, then they could be open to litigation from the rights holder, legal experts say.

Mr. Allen said the law was making Facebook reluctant to take proactive steps against infringement. “It’s a bizarre situation,” he wrote. He added that “it would be awesome to see [Facebook] working with lawmakers to find a better solution here.”

In early 2020, reining in unoriginal content was a top priority for Facebook’s integrity team and researchers were pushing for fixes. But in April of that year, [Anna Stepanov, a product manager who was exploring ways to counter misinformation](#), came back from a meeting with Chief Executive [Mark Zuckerberg](#) with bad news: the proposed solution by Mr. Allen—reducing the reach of pages whose posts always seemed to go viral—would be “deprioritized,” she wrote, “in favor of projects that have clearer integrity impact.”

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HEADLINE	11/09 Iranian hackers targeting telecoms, ISPs
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.zdnet.com/article/meet-lyceum-iranian-hackers-targeting-telecoms-isps/">https://www.zdnet.com/article/meet-lyceum-iranian-hackers-targeting-telecoms-isps/</a>
GIST	<p>Researchers have provided a deep dive into the activities of Lyceum; an Iranian threat group focused on infiltrating the networks of telecoms companies and internet service providers (ISPs).</p> <p>Lyceum, also known as Hexane, Siamesekitten, or Spirlin, has been active since 2017. The advanced persistent threat (APT) group has been linked to campaigns striking Middle Eastern oil and gas companies in the past and now appears to have expanded its focus to include the technology sector.</p> <p>According to a report <a href="#">published on Tuesday</a> by Accenture Cyber Threat Intelligence (ACTI) and Prevailion Adversarial Counterintelligence (PACT), between July and October this year, Lyceum was spotted in attacks against ISPs and telecoms organizations across Israel, Morocco, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia.</p> <p>In addition, the APT is responsible for a campaign against an African ministry of foreign affairs.</p>



The cybersecurity teams say that several of the "identified compromises" remain active at the time of publication.

Lyceum's initial attack vectors include credential stuffing attacks and brute-force attacks. According to [Secureworks](#), individual accounts at companies of interest are usually targeted -- and then once these accounts are breached, they are used as a springboard to launch spear-phishing attacks against high-profile executives in an organization.

The APT appears to be focused on cyberespionage. The report suggests that not only do these attackers seek out data on subscribers and connected third-party companies, but once compromised, "threat actors or their sponsors can also use these industries to surveil individuals of interest."

Lyceum will attempt to deploy two different kinds of malware: Shark and Milan (known together as James). Both are backdoors; Shark, a 32-bit executable written in C# and .NET, generates a configuration file for DNS tunneling or HTTP C2 communications, whereas Milan -- a 32-bit Remote Access Trojan (RAT) retrieves data. Both are able to communicate with the groups' command-and-control (C2) servers.

The APT maintains a C2 server network that connects to the group's backdoors, consisting of over 20 domains, including six that were previously not associated with the threat actors.

The backdoor malware families have previously been disclosed by [ClearSky](#) and [Kaspersky](#) (.PDF).

The ACTI/PACT researchers recently found a new backdoor similar to newer versions of Milan, which sent beacons linked to potential attacks against a Tunisian telecoms company and a government agency in Africa.

"It is unknown if the Milan backdoor beacons are coming from a customer of the Moroccan telecommunication operator or from internal systems within the operator," the researchers say.

"However, since Lyceum has historically targeted telecommunication providers and the Kaspersky team identified recent targeting of telecommunication operators in Tunisia, it would follow that Lyceum is targeting other north Africa telecommunication companies."

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Clop exploiting SolarWinds Serv-U flaw</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/clop-gang-exploiting-solarwinds-serv-u-flaw-in-ransomware-attacks/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/clop-gang-exploiting-solarwinds-serv-u-flaw-in-ransomware-attacks/</a>
GIST	<p>The Clop ransomware gang, also tracked as TA505 and FIN11, is exploiting a SolarWinds Serv-U vulnerability to breach corporate networks and ultimately encrypt its devices.</p> <p>The Serv-U Managed File Transfer and Serv-U Secure FTP remote code execution vulnerability, tracked as CVE-2021-35211, allows a remote threat actor to execute commands on a vulnerable server with elevated privileges.</p> <p>SolarWinds <a href="#">released an emergency security update</a> in July 2021 after discovering a "a single threat actor" exploiting it in attacks.</p> <p>The company also warned that this vulnerability only affects customers who have enabled the SSH feature, which is commonly used to further protect connections to the FTP server.</p> <p><b>Vulnerability used in ransomware attacks</b></p> <p>According to <a href="#">a new report by the NCC Group</a>, there's been an uptick in Clop ransomware infections in the past couple of weeks, with most of them starting with the exploitation of CVE-2021-35211.</p>



While the Clop gang is known to use vulnerabilities in their attacks, such as the [Accellion zero-day attacks](#), the researchers state that TA505 more commonly uses [phishing emails](#) with malicious attachments to breach networks.

In the new attacks spotted by NCC, the threat actors exploit Serv-U to spawn a sub-process controlled by the attackers, thus enabling them to run commands on the target system.

This opens up the way for malware deployment, network reconnaissance, and lateral movement, essentially laying the ground for a ransomware attack.

A characteristic sign of this flaw being exploited is exception errors in the Serv-U logs, caused when the vulnerability is exploited.

The exception error shown in logs will be similar to the following string:  
'EXCEPTION: C0000005; CSUSSHSocket::ProcessReceive();'

Another sign of exploitation is traces of PowerShell command execution, which is used to deploy a Cobalt Strike beacon on the vulnerable system.

For persistence, the actors hijack a legitimate scheduled task that is used for regularly backing up registry hives and abuse the associated COM handler to load '[FlawedGrace RAT](#).'

FlawedGrace is a tool that TA505 has been using since at least November 2017, and it remains a reliable part of the group's arsenal.

NCC Group has posted the following handy checklist for system administrators who suspect compromise:

- Check if your Serv-U version is vulnerable
- Locate the Serv-U's DebugSocketlog.txt
- Search for entries such as 'EXCEPTION: C0000005; CSUSSHSocket::ProcessReceive();' in this log file
- Check for Event ID 4104 in the Windows Event logs surrounding the date/time of the exception and look for suspicious PowerShell commands
- Check for the presence of a hijacked Scheduled Task named RegIdleBackup using the provided PowerShell command
- In case of abuse: the CLSID in the COM handler should NOT be set to {CA767AA8-9157-4604-B64B-40747123D5F2}
- If the task includes a different CLSID: check the content of the CLSID objects in the registry using the provided PowerShell command, returned Base64 encoded strings can be an indicator of compromise.

Despite the numerous alerts to apply the security update, many vulnerable Serv-U servers remain publicly accessible.

Most vulnerable Serv-U FTP instances are located in China, while the United States comes in second.

It's been almost four months since SolarWinds released the security update for this vulnerability, but the percentage of potentially vulnerable Serv-U servers remains above 60%.

"In July, 5945 (~94%) of all Serv-U (S)FTP services identified on port 22 were potentially vulnerable. In October, three months after SolarWinds released their patch, the number of potentially vulnerable servers is still significant at 2784 (66.5%)," warn the researchers in their report.

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HEADLINE	11/10 EU antitrust ruling against Google upheld
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxbusiness.com/technology/eu-court-upholds-eu-antitrust-ruling-against-google">https://www.foxbusiness.com/technology/eu-court-upholds-eu-antitrust-ruling-against-google</a>

GIST	<p><a href="#">Alphabet unit Google</a> suffered a setback on Wednesday after Europe's second-highest court dismissed its challenge to an EU antitrust ruling and 2.42 billion euro (\$2.8 billion) fine in a major win for EU competition chief Margrethe Vestager.</p> <p>Vestager sanctioned the world's most popular internet search engine in 2017 for favoring its own price-comparison shopping service to give it an unfair advantage against smaller European rivals.</p> <p>The shopping case was the first of a trio of decisions that have seen Google rack up a total of 8.25 billion euros in EU antitrust fines in the last decade. Vestager subsequently took on Amazon, Apple and Facebook, where investigations are still ongoing.</p> <p>"The General Court largely dismisses Google's action against the decision of the Commission finding that Google abused its dominant position by favouring its own comparison shopping service over competing comparison shopping services," the Court said.</p> <p>Google can appeal to the EU Court of Justice (CJEU), Europe's top court, on points of law.</p> <p>The case is T-612/17 Google and Alphabet v Commission (Google Shopping).</p>
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## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	11/10 Limbo: 1,300 evacuated Afghan children
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/when-are-my-parents-coming-1300-afghan-children-evacuated-us-limbo-2021-11-10/">https://www.reuters.com/world/when-are-my-parents-coming-1300-afghan-children-evacuated-us-limbo-2021-11-10/</a>
GIST	<p>RENTON, Washington, Nov 10 (Reuters) - Ten-year-old Mansoor only narrowly escaped Afghanistan as it fell to the Taliban in August, and while he is now living safely in Washington state with relatives, he asks them every day if he can return.</p> <p>In the chaos around the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the evacuation of more than 70,000 Afghans to the United States, Mansoor was separated from his parents and siblings.</p> <p>Mansoor was carrying his relative Shogofa's toddler, as they entered the airport in Kabul. At that moment, shots rang out and the military closed the gates in between Mansoor and his parents. After three days in the airport, he boarded a plane with Shogofa, who hoped the rest of the family would make it out on a later flight.</p> <p>Shogofa ended up on a U.S. military base in New Jersey with her own two young children, Mansoor, and other relatives. After several weeks, they joined her sister, Nilofar, who lives in the Seattle area. Mansoor's parents are currently in hiding in Afghanistan because of his father's former position in the Afghan government.</p> <p>Now, Mansoor mostly sits by himself and rarely plays with the other children, Nilofar said. The family requested only their first names be published to protect Mansoor's parents and other relatives still in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Mansoor is among approximately 1,300 children evacuated to the United States from Afghanistan without their parents or legal guardians, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which oversees the care of unaccompanied minors. The figure has not been previously reported.</p> <p>Many of the Afghan minors were unintentionally separated from their parents in Kabul, advocates said.</p> <p>The complicated situations of the minors, coupled with language barriers and lack of culturally appropriate foster families for those who don't have sponsors in the United States, is creating a tangled knot of</p>

problems for the U.S. government. Primary among them: no clear mechanism for reuniting children who are now in the United States with parents still stuck abroad.

The administration of President Joe Biden is working on ways to expedite the entry of parents whose children are already in the United States, according to two U.S. officials who requested anonymity.

Without a fast track, parents abroad will likely be stuck in a long backlog of Afghans who are applying for U.S. entry on humanitarian grounds.

Most of the children and adult evacuees have been allowed temporarily into the United States, protecting them from deportation but not giving them permanent legal status. The children will likely have to find legal help to navigate the complex immigration system.

Since August 2021, the government says it has received more than 26,000 requests for temporary entry from Afghan nationals abroad. Fewer than 100 applications have been conditionally approved since July 1, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Afghans have to travel to a third country to even apply because the U.S. embassy in Kabul is closed.

Mansoor's parents have mostly avoided cell phones for fear of being tracked down by the new Islamist militant rulers, Nilofar said. On Nov. 1, the boy spoke with his parents for the first time since he was separated from them in late August.

"To not know what will happen to them, and then also to not know if and how and when their families might escape, and will their families be okay" is causing huge amounts of stress and trauma for the children, said Jennifer Vanegas, supervising attorney with the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center.

#### IN SHELTERS

Most of the unaccompanied migrant children in U.S. government shelters - currently more than 11,000 down from peaks of more than 22,000 earlier in the year - are from Central America. Unlike the Afghan children, minors from Central America have often intentionally set out on their own with the aim of reuniting with parents or other family already in the United States.

HHS says its aim is to reunite migrant children with U.S. sponsors as quickly and safely as possible.

More than 1,000 of the unaccompanied children from Afghanistan have been released, the bulk with relatives they were originally traveling with, like Mansoor, according to the HHS.

Typically, unaccompanied migrant children traveling with family members who are not parents or legal guardians are separated and placed in government care. But authorities made an exception to the rule in policy guidance issued on Sept. 4 that said Afghan children could be released to adults with proven "bona fide" relationships who had been screened by U.S. officials.

As of Monday, 266 unaccompanied Afghan children remain in government shelters and long-term foster care arrangements around the country, HHS said.

Among them are dozens of children who have no relatives or family friends in the United States who they can be released to. Their cases have been languishing in the system, said Ashley Huebner with nonprofit National Immigrant Justice Center in Chicago, where many Afghan children are being sheltered.

"I think overall the lack of action here is quite shocking," she said. Two months since the evacuation, "it should not be this difficult."

Vanegas in Michigan said there are currently 126 children at the Starr Commonwealth Emergency Intake Site in the state and as of Tuesday, 27 of them had been there longer than 40 days.

Many potential foster families do not speak the children's native language and are not familiarized with Afghan customs, advocates said.

Afghan American groups have found people in the community willing to take children in, but are hitting snags in a long and complicated state licensing process for foster families. A coalition of groups sent a letter to HHS on Nov. 3, which was seen by Reuters, asking the agency to "expedite and demystify reunification and placement processes, such as foster care, sponsorship, and humanitarian parole," among other recommendations to minimize the "displacement, uncertainty, loss and grief" the children are facing.

HHS said it is working with shelters to ensure facilities are culturally appropriate and is providing mental health care for traumatized kids. At the same time the agency said it is trying to place children according to the wishes of their parents abroad.

## ANGUISH

Children such as Saddam Aziz, 15, are dealing with the shock of forced displacement on top of the anguish of not knowing if their parents are safe. Saddam had also expected to travel with his parents, but was separated from them when he went to fetch water during a long wait at Kabul airport. When Saddam came back with the water, his family was gone.

Unable to find them, he approached U.S. soldiers at the airport and asked for help, according to Jamaluddin Rohani, his uncle who lives in Washington state. When they, too, couldn't find his family, the soldiers told him to board a flight to Qatar, and to look for his parents there, Rohani said.

In Qatar, Saddam, who is slightly built and looks young for his age, was moved to a compound for unaccompanied migrant children.

Rohani said he first heard about his nephew's whereabouts in a call from the United Nations' children's agency UNICEF telling him Saddam was in Qatar on his own. The agency - and Rohani - had no idea where Saddam's parents were.

"For three days, I didn't sleep," Rohani said.

Finally Rohani got word that his brother - Saddam's father - was alive, but hiding in Afghanistan because he had worked with the Afghan government and the U.S. military.

There was nowhere else for Saddam to go except to Rohani, an uncle he hadn't seen in years.

Saddam was first transferred to the emergency children's shelter in Michigan where he was quarantined for COVID-19. "He called me and said, 'I am scared, there is nothing here,'" Rohani said. The government case manager told Rohani that Saddam repeatedly asked when his parents would get there to pick him up.

After several weeks, he was able to join his uncle. Since his arrival, Saddam has been helping around the house and has enrolled in school. But Rohani, who works as a security guard, worries he won't be able to support his nephew long-term. "For a year, maybe, I can do it, but after that I can't, because I am low income, and I have a big family," he said.

Some evacuees who ended up traveling with children who were not their own have said they are not able to care for the children long term. A handful of children who had these relationships break down have ended up in government shelters, according to advocates.

On a recent Saturday, Saddam hung out with his cousins, playing video games and basketball, and watching a neighbor play with a toy remote-controlled car. Rohani said he is doing his best to fit into the rhythm of his new household.

	But Rohani said Saddam still regularly asks "when are my parents coming?" Rohani's answer: "I don't know."
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HEADLINE	<b>11/10 Taliban ready to build own air force?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://eurasianimes.com/taliban-plan-to-raise-their-own-air-force-will-china-help/">https://eurasianimes.com/taliban-plan-to-raise-their-own-air-force-will-china-help/</a>
GIST	<p><b>Barely two months into their regime, the Taliban have announced their intention to build their own air force, according to reports.</b></p> <p>The group seems to be planning on enhancing its stock of weapons and upping the skillset among its ranks. They already have a considerable number of aircraft at their disposal, thanks to the US' withdrawal from Afghanistan.</p> <p>Qari Saeed Khosty, a spokesperson for the Taliban's Ministry of the Interior, reportedly said: "We are trying to use the previous government's air force – the professionals that they had – and make sure they all return. The best policy for us is – whatever department is needed; we are going to have it."</p> <p>"No doubt, a full air force will be built soon – once the regime is fully established. It is not fully established yet," another person familiar with the development was quoted as saying by <a href="#">ANI</a>.</p> <p>Meanwhile, a group of nearly 200 stranded Afghan refugees, including military pilots, will soon be evacuated from Tajikistan after they fled Afghanistan as the Taliban advanced to take over the country during the summer, US Defense Department spokesperson John Kirby said.</p> <p><i>"What I can confirm is that a group of approximately 191 Afghan evacuees, including pilots, remain in Tajikistan, and our embassy there is working to expedite their departure. We expect that they'll be able to depart Tajikistan soon, but we are not in control of the timeline," Kirby said during a press briefing.</i></p> <p>Some 150 military pilots have been detained for more than three months by the authorities in Tajikistan following their crossing over the border from Afghanistan in a bid to save their lives.</p> <p><a href="#">The EurAsian Times</a> had earlier reported that the militant group that took over Afghanistan are in control of US military aircraft including Black Hawks, A-29 attack planes, MD-530 utility helicopters besides Russian Mi-24 assault choppers.</p> <p>The US State Department also seemingly abandoned a couple of Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight medium-lift helicopters in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Besides these, it was noted that the Afghan Air Force was using 23 A-29 attack planes, four C-130 cargo planes, and 33 militarized versions of the Cessna Caravan for light attack missions quite close to the day the Taliban took over.</p> <p>The Air Force also had 150 choppers, including the American UH-60 Black Hawk utility helicopters, armed MD-530s, and Soviet Mi-17s which were about to be retired soon.</p> <p>Around a month ago, <a href="#">Al Jazeera</a> had reported that the Taliban working to put together its own air force. A short documentary produced by the news outlet revealed that the militant group had recruited a team comprising engineers, aviation experts, and technicians to restore the military equipment and hardware that was destroyed and left behind by foreign forces, especially the US, in Afghanistan.</p> <p>The report quoted engineers as saying that they had already managed to repair dozens of aircraft. It also pointed to a poignant situation, highlighting the story of a pilot, Major Farid Ahmad, who moved from being a Taliban target to being a part of their air force in a matter of just a couple of months.</p> <p><b>Taliban Air Force</b></p>

The report also talked about the dozens of aircraft, as well as hundreds of armored vehicles and thousands of guns that the Taliban were then already in possession of. Despite all these, analysts believe that the Taliban will face obstacles in using them long-term.

There was, and is, skepticism around the group's technical capabilities. The sustenance of these aircraft requires a high level of maintenance, which might prove to be a challenge without enough trained professionals, something the Taliban seems to be facing a dearth of.

Then, there is the issue of the presence of trained pilots. While some pilots like Major Ahmad did stay back, many US-trained Afghan Air Force Pilots escaped to neighboring Tajikistan and now waiting for relocation.

The State Department official declined to offer a precise timeline for the transfer to [Reuters](#). However, they did add that the US wanted to move all of those held at the same time.

### **China's Eye On Afghanistan**

The number of terrorist groups operating from within Afghanistan is on the rise. Taliban's cabinet is considering the viability of handing over the Bagram airbase to a third country to receive aid in [counter-terrorism operations](#).

Beijing seems to be seeking a foothold in Afghanistan to allay its worries about anti-Beijing violent groups that operate in the region.

These groups include the likes of Balochistan Liberation Army, Tehreek-e-Taliban, Pakistan, and IS Khorasan Province. By courting the Taliban regime via Pakistan, China likely hopes to keep Uighur terrorists in check, ensuring that they do not launch operations against the Xi Jinping regime using Afghanistan as a base.

The other reason for China's interest in the Bagram base, analysts believe, could be to expand its influence in the region and embarrass the US. Recently, unconfirmed [reports indicated](#) the presence of Chinese aircraft at the base. The Taliban denied this claim, though.

### **US' Prospects In The Region**

Although the US has largely withdrawn itself from Afghanistan with the war coming to a close, this doesn't necessarily mean that Washington is not invested in the region anymore.

Militant organizations such as ISIS-Khorasan, and Al-Qaeda are still active in the region. Biden administration's [plan](#) to deal with them seems to largely rely on the over-the-horizon airstrikes.

This will necessitate the presence of the Air Force — including fighters or bombers for strikes; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft; drones; and other support aircraft and functions such as tankers. Certain US bases in the middle-east can come in handy for this.

The Navy is bound to play an [enhanced role](#) in the region too. It has its aircraft carriers in the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf to support the ground fights in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Now, with the lack of US-controlled airfields near Afghanistan, it is likely that more planes will take off from carriers at sea. It is not known yet if the US has any immediate plans to help the Taliban to raise an air force, but Washington would surely closely monitor the region if China makes the first move in this regard.

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HEADLINE	11/09 Study: terrorist prisoners study psychology
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2021/11/09/terrorist-prisoners-study-psychology-to-fool-rehab-professionals/">https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/uk-news/2021/11/09/terrorist-prisoners-study-psychology-to-fool-rehab-professionals/</a>
GIST	Terrorist prisoners across Europe, such as London Bridge attacker Usman Khan, are hiding in plain sight and deceiving deradicalisation professionals, a study has found.

The Counter Extremism Project think tank is calling for “significant improvements” in rehabilitation schemes after it found some terrorists were studying psychology to bluff professionals into believing they no longer pose a threat.

In its study released on Tuesday, the think tank makes 13 recommendations for dealing with extremist prisoners, including the use of lie detectors, and is calling on European nations to follow the UK in ending automatic early release for prisoners convicted of terrorism.

It advises that extremists should have limited contact with each other in prison to avoid them exploiting the system.

Report author, Ian Acheson, recommends creating a unified team with permanent overall responsibility for offenders to prevent dangerous extremists from “falling through the net”.

“One unified, multidisciplinary team with executive authority would better ensure coherence and continuity in offender risk management, thereby reducing handovers and rationalising the dangerous sprawl of the terrorist offender threat response,” it says.

“These new arrangements, combining stable and long-term relationship-building with assertive intervention, would make disguised compliance harder to sustain.”

It cites the case of [Usman Khan, who having been released halfway through a prison sentence for plotting to blow up the London Stock Exchange killed two people](#) at a rehabilitation event after conning those monitoring him.

“While Khan was released with 16 separate licence conditions and the highest level of multiagency public protection arrangements, he still managed to create a positive and enduring image of a reformed citizen in the minds of those who worked with him,” the report says.

“This undoubtedly had an impact on decisions to allow him to travel to and attend the public function unsupervised, despite still being regarded as high-risk. Indeed, a UK inquest into his victims’ deaths in April 2021 reveals that while in prison, Khan was one of the main extremists responsible for radicalising others in his wing.”

Vienna attacker, [Kujtim Fejzulai, murdered four people in November 2020](#) and injured more than 20 others after being released early from a jail sentence for terrorism after undergoing a deradicalisation programme.

“The perpetrator managed to fool the deradicalisation programme of the justice system, to fool the people in it and to get an early release through this,” Austria’s Interior Minister, Karl Nehammer, said at the time.

[Convicted terrorist Sudesh Amman](#) was also under special police surveillance when he stabbed two people in Streatham, south London, in February 2020.

Released from prison the previous week after serving part of a three-year sentence for terrorist-related activities, he was also deemed a sufficiently high risk to require close monitoring.

The report says that many violent extremists consider detention “as a test of their commitment to their cause”.

“During their sentence, they look for ways to convince those with whom they interact, eg, prison officers, social workers, psychologists, that they have understood the error of their ways and have turned over a new leaf to speed up their release.”



	<p>It says some convicted terrorists had opted to study psychology and while that “could be perceived as a positive step forward, experts allege that in many cases they use what they learn to better manipulate the work of prison therapists”.</p> <p>The authors argue for a more assertive and tailored approach to establishing the authenticity of jailed terrorists and the report calls for “sense-checking” of extremists “by a team of practitioners surrounding the individual”.</p> <p>"The stakes are far too high for a failure in identifying those still wedded to violent extremism," it says. "Violent extremists' short-term exposure to therapists seems an unlikely way to foster an authentic and sustainable new identity in environments as fragile and abnormal as prisons.</p> <p>"These complexities and risks suggest an approach that should be longer, more individualised, more intrusive and more sceptical than the current fashion for short-term metered ‘doses’ of generic intervention."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Fleeing Afghan pilots evacuated to UAE</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/world/asia/afghan-pilots-tajikistan-taliban.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/world/asia/afghan-pilots-tajikistan-taliban.html</a>
GIST	<p>More than 140 Afghan Air Force pilots and crew members detained in Tajikistan since mid-August after fleeing Afghanistan were flown out of the country Tuesday with the help of the American authorities, according to a retired U.S. Air Force officer who leads a volunteer group that has assisted the Afghans.</p> <p>The flight, bound for the United Arab Emirates, ended a three-month ordeal for the U.S.-trained military personnel, who had flown American-supplied aircraft to Tajikistan to escape the Taliban only to end up in custody.</p> <p>The Afghans said they were counting on the U.S. government to secure their freedom after they were detained by the Tajik authorities after the Taliban seized power in their home country and they fled, fearing reprisals.</p> <p>In WhatsApp audio recordings made on smuggled cellphones, the English-speaking pilots described poor conditions, insufficient food rations and limited medical care at the site where they were being held outside the capital, Dushanbe.</p> <p>Brig. Gen. David Hicks, a retired Air Force officer who is chief executive of <a href="#">Operation Sacred Promise</a>, said a plane carrying the Afghans had departed Dushanbe on Tuesday night, U.S. Eastern time, after a long delay.</p> <p>“It’s just such a great relief for the entire team knowing that they are getting out of this period of uncertainty and taking the first step in starting their new lives,” General Hicks said. “Hopefully, they will all be reunited with their families soon.”</p> <p>But for many Afghans who worked with the U.S. military, the ordeal is not over.</p> <p>Several thousand Afghan Air Force pilots and crew members remain in hiding in Afghanistan, with some saying they feel abandoned by the U.S. military, their longtime combat ally. They say they are desperate to leave Afghanistan because they and their families are at risk of being hunted down and killed by the Taliban.</p> <p>In telephone interviews from safe houses in Afghanistan, several Afghan Air Force pilots described moving from house to house to avoid detection. They said they were running out of money and did not dare look for work because they feared being discovered by the militants.</p>

The Taliban have said there is a general amnesty for any Afghan who served in the former government or worked with the U.S. government or military. But several Afghan Air Force pilots have been [killed by the Taliban](#) this year.

General Hicks said the flight that let Tajikistan on Tuesday had been arranged by the State Department, which also aided in the [evacuation](#) in September of a separate group of Afghan pilots and crew members who had flown to Uzbekistan. Those Afghans were taken to a U.S. military base in the United Arab Emirates.

The Taliban had pressured Uzbekistan to return the pilots and crew members to Afghanistan.

The State Department did not immediately comment.

On Sunday, a department spokesperson offered no timeline for relocating the Afghans but said American officials were speaking regularly with the Tajikistan government. The spokesperson said the U.S. government had verified the identities of the approximately 150 Afghans after gaining access to them in mid-October.

Many Afghan pilots were trained in the United States to fly U.S.-supplied military planes and helicopters. The United States spent more than [\\$8 billion](#) to train and equip the Afghan Air Force, but the pilots and planes were overwhelmed by the demands of supporting [a U.S.-trained army that quickly collapsed](#) as the Taliban toppled one provincial capital after another this summer.

Some pilots and crew members and their families were evacuated with the help of the U.S. government and military just after the Taliban takeover in August. But many more were unable to get out, despite attempts by their former advisers to help them.

Since mid-August, General Hicks said, Operation Sacred Promise has helped evacuate about 350 Afghans. The group has vetted about 2,000 Afghan Air Force personnel and their relatives trying to leave Afghanistan, with about 8,000 more still to be vetted, he said.

The status of the Afghan Air Force aircraft flown to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan remains unclear.

During Afghanistan's collapse, about [25 percent](#) of the Afghan Air Force's aircraft were flown to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, according to an Oct. 31 report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. General Hicks put the number at 56 to 60 aircraft.

U.S. forces rendered unusable [80 others](#) at Kabul's airport in late August.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Next 9/11 be caused by drones?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsweek.com/could-next-9-11-caused-drones-1647249">https://www.newsweek.com/could-next-9-11-caused-drones-1647249</a>
GIST	<p>Twenty years after the worst attack to ever occur on U.S. soil, it's not just large, populated passenger planes that keep officials and experts up at night, but also the threat of smaller, readily available unmanned aerial systems capable of carrying deadly payloads through the skies of an unsuspecting nation.</p> <p>Drones are not tomorrow's weapons of mass destruction. They're here today, and the technology required to fashion such a device is only getting cheaper, smarter and more accessible.</p> <p>One <a href="#">U.S. military</a> official who requested anonymity paints a potential nightmare scenario involving small drones, referred to as unmanned aerial systems, unmanned aircraft systems, or simply, UAS.</p> <p>"I kind of wonder what could you do if you had a couple of small UAS and you flew into a crowded stadium," the U.S. military official told <i>Newsweek</i>. "That could cause a lot of damage and it's a scenario that could potentially be in play."</p>

While "no specific knowledge" of an active threat was discussed, the U.S. military official said that "there is concern given the proliferation of small, portable drones, that explosive drones could cause a mass casualty event."

It wouldn't be the first time the nation had been caught off guard by a possible danger looming right in front of authorities.

"It's just like I had no specific knowledge before 9/11 that people could hijack planes and crash into buildings, but John Clancy wrote a book about it," the U.S. military official said.

When the political thriller "Debt of Honor" was released in 1994 depicting a hijacked airliner targeting the U.S. Capitol, the concept of an aerial suicide raid had largely been confined in the national consciousness to the experience of Japanese kamikaze pilots in World War II. It wasn't until nearly 3,000 were killed on September 11, 2001 that what had been an eventuality became a reality.

But when it comes to UAS, the age of tactical drone warfare is already upon us. Shortly after 9/11, the United States became the first country to truly weaponize drones, fitting them with precision missiles that became a staple of the "War on Terror."

In the years since, drones have evolved from a high-end military technology to a commercial hobby flown by enthusiasts across the globe and sold by a multitude of companies on the civilian market. With the explosion of this seemingly innocent innovation has come a rise in nefarious usage that the U.S. military official with whom *Newsweek* spoke described as "an emergent threat" already demonstrated in several high-profile events.

One such event came just last weekend when three explosive-laden UAS, believed to be simple quadcopter models, targeted the residence of Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi in an assassination attempt. Kadhimi lived, but photos released of his home revealed the destructive capabilities of such devices.

Kadhimi was not the first world leader to be preyed upon by bomb-rigged UAS. In August 2018, two drones carrying explosives detonated in an apparent failed attempt to take out Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro during a military parade in Caracas. He also escaped with his life.

Prior to these incidents, militants and militias had already managed to utilize such technology, giving non-state actors a sort of rudimentary yet deadly air force to take on better-equipped foes. In Iraq and Syria, U.S. troops have been targeted from above by both the Islamic State militant group ([ISIS](#)) and Iran-aligned paramilitary forces.

Even more destructive platforms have seen action on the battlefield in the form of what's known as loitering munitions, or suicide drones. Last year, Azerbaijani forces demonstrated a deadly edge over Armenian rivals during a brief but bloody war over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh territory through their use.

"They're relatively small, inexpensive drones, but they kind of cross that boundary between a drone and guided missile," the U.S. military official said.

This point was echoed by a security official from Israel, a country that produced some of the loitering munitions employed by Azerbaijani forces with substantial effect and now prove a potential concern for Iran as tensions simmer between the neighbors.

"This tool today is so easy, and small drones, you just really order them in and you've got yourself like a guided precision missile," the Israeli security official told *Newsweek*.

The Israeli security official noted that even with their current destructive potential, the munitions attached to such UAS today are in their relative infancy, not yet on a scale that any one of them alone could replicate a 9/11-style attack.

But their potential is already rapidly growing.

"They are becoming much more accurate in their capabilities of navigation," the Israeli security official said. "I think where we will be seeing things is that the amount of explosives will get bigger now."

Smaller commercial UAS have another unique advantage over traditional aircraft and missile platforms: They have no launch signature, making them far more difficult to detect. Used in greater numbers, known as a swarm, they're also harder to intercept.

"If you need to intercept a dozen, an F-16 payload, if it's only doing air-to-air would be about six different air-to-air missiles, or similar to an F-35," the Israeli security official said. "So that already means that you need a few airplanes, and you need the time if you're looking at interception."

Israel was among the first nations to refine wartime drone technology, and it continues to field various platforms for covert missions. But its rivals have also demonstrated an early prowess for such technology, as proven by the Lebanese Hezbollah, the Palestinian Hamas, and their supporter, Iran.

Iran has developed an extensive arsenal of drones, including suicide drones capable of flying beyond 2,000 kilometers, exceeding 1,240 miles. Israel and the U.S. have both accused Iran of directly supplying UAS technology to partnered militias across the region, an allegation denied by the Islamic Republic.

China has also excelled in UAS technology, and Russia has developed high-end systems of its own as well.

The Israeli security official noted another trend that could prove deeply problematic to the safety of the region and beyond, a trend linked to Israel's ally, the U.S., and the withdrawal from a 20-year war in Afghanistan, where ISIS has sought to stage a comeback in a country the U.S. first entered in response to 9/11.

"We see another rise of terror, and I'll say, being both humble and appreciative to the U.S., but after Afghanistan, we do see a rise in what potentially could come again with the terror activities and the kind of backing that some of the terror organizations feel stronger and maybe even more courageous," the Israeli security official said. "This tool of drones can definitely be something that we might be seeing more."

One man who has written and spoken extensively on the potential impact of drones in the wrong hands is Zachary Kallenborn.

Kallenborn is a policy fellow at George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government and a research affiliate with the University of Maryland's Unconventional Weapons and Technology Division of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. He has also served as a national security consultant and contributed to the U.S. Army as part of its Mad Scientist Laboratory.

"Drones are definitely capable of causing mass casualties," Kallenborn told Newsweek.

Echoing the example put forth by the U.S. military official with whom Newsweek spoke, he imagines a crowded event as a potential target.

"Growing drone technology also increasingly allows drones to be flown autonomously or in collaborative swarms," Kallenborn said. "That increases the damage potential significantly. Imagine a terrorist air raid: a group of drones dropping bombs on a concert or stadium crowd."

Even more damaging, attackers could vastly multiply casualties by employing weapons of mass destruction, Kallenborn warned.

"Drones would be highly effective delivery systems for chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons," he said. "Drones could, say, spray the agent right over a crowded area."

Kallenborn said he was "also quite concerned about drone attacks on airplanes, because aircraft engines and wings are not designed to survive drone strikes."

But he notes that "who the attacker is matters a lot," adding that "a big limiter" for the worst-case scenarios "is the ability of terrorists to acquire the chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear agent, which they have historically struggled with."

He pointed out the difficulty of a militant group acquiring both the material and manpower to fly a larger swarm-sized fleet while avoiding detection.

"But that limitation is not an issue for state militaries," Kallenborn said. "Militaries have the resources and technology to make truly massive swarms that could rival the harm of traditional weapons of mass destruction, including small nuclear weapons."

"Not only is such a weapon massively powerful, it would be quite difficult to control," he added. "If you have 1,000 drones working together without human control, that's 1,000 opportunities for failure. And even more, because in a true drone swarm, the drones talk. As we've seen with COVID vaccine paranoia, misinformation can spread easily even among beings far smarter than an algorithm-guided drone."

As humans and machines are wont to err, so are defenses, and drones add a new level of difficulty in their ability to conduct random, difficult-to-detect operations. The U.S. military official with whom Newsweek spoke expressed a level of skepticism regarding existing defenses being acquired by the Department of Defense.

"The DOD is pouring a lot of money and effort into counter-UAS technology, but I think the DOD's PR exceeds the actual capability of these devices," the U.S. military official said.

One of the agencies keeping an eye out for UAS and drone activity on the domestic side is the Federal Aviation Authority. An FAA spokesperson told Newsweek that "the FAA is tasked with ensuring the safety of the National Airspace System (NAS) as well as people and property on the ground."

"When criminal activity is suspected, we work with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners by providing them assistance with their investigations and prosecutions," the spokesperson said.

One way in which the FAA is seeking to improve the ability for authorities to determine potential problems posed by UAS is by enforcing remote identification, through which drones would be required to provide key information such as identity, altitude and current location as well as the location of its operator and take-off point.

"Remote identification requirements for all UAS operators, when combined with our current registration requirement, will enable more effective detection and identification," the FAA spokesperson said. "This will also help law enforcement to connect an unauthorized drone with its operator. Remote identification will help law enforcement determine if a drone poses an actual threat that needs to be mitigated, or if it's an errant drone that got away from someone but means no harm."

The rise of the drone threat has given birth to a booming new industry of counter-drone technologies. Among the leading companies in this field is DroneShield, an Australian firm that has supplied cutting-edge tools to the likes of the NATO military alliance and the United Nations.

DroneShield CEO Oleg Vernik shared Kallenborn's concerns about WMD-strapped UAS in large numbers.

"Small UAS can be seen as a highly effective and cheap platform for surveillance and payload delivery," Vernik told Newsweek. "For payload delivery, a small UAS can easily carry up to a few pounds of weight — this is a lot of explosive or biological or chemical weapons."

"What's more," he added, "at \$1,000-\$2,000 per UAS, and swarming technologies available today (think of giant figures in the sky or fireworks, all generated by choreographed drones), this can be easily in 100s of drones, each carrying a dangerous substance."

These figures may seem high, but Vernik argued that the general lack of oversight would make it hard to track acquisition. And even if suggested controls were put in place, he said, the threat would only partially be addressed.

"UAS can be purchased today in a completely unrestricted way, being considered toys, essentially. Registration would solve some of the issue, but consider how many unregistered firearms get used for terrorism," Vernik said. "The pilot of the drone would also be invisible/difficult to catch in an attack, making it more appealing to use"

In addition to the kinetic threat, he warned of potential cyber attacks employing UAS.

"Call it a conspiracy, but we received reports that the Ever Given container ship (yes, the one that blocked Suez Canal and stopped much of sea traffic) was due to a cyber hacking from a drone, when a request for ransom was denied," Vernik said. "We are now hearing of this commonly from ship customers, especially in areas close to the better-known rogue states."

Last week, DroneShield released the 6th edition of its C-UAS, or counter-UAS, factbook, which details the scope of potential threats posed by small drones.

The guide covers recent events in drone warfare, including the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the 2019 attacks on Saudi Aramco oil sites, claimed by Yemen's Ansar Allah, of Houthi, movement but blamed by Saudi Arabia and the U.S. on Iran. It also gives examples of the latest innovations by China and Russia, and identifies some of the most popular heavy-lifting UAS that could be used even more discretely than their larger cousins.

The report provides potential solutions as well, including a range of detection capabilities such as radio frequency, radar, acoustic, optics and multi-sensor systems. It also lists neutralizing assets including radio frequency jammers, GPS jammers, cyber tactics, directed energy attacks, counter-UAS drones and kinetic systems capable of blasting UAS out of the sky.

"Without dedicated C-UAS system (for detection and defeat of such UAS)," Vernik said, "there would be no warning and no time to react, until it is too late and the damage is done."

As to whether such tools and methods would be employed before the next attack, he has expressed a note of skepticism.

"We live in a reactive society," Vernik said. "Boulders across the pathways have only started to be placed after terrorists used vehicles to bulldoze through crowds, as an example."

He warned that governments and their law enforcement and security agencies must start setting up systems now to defend against UAS attacks.

"We need to be more proactive in setting up UAS detection and defeat systems across areas where large gatherings of people are likely, the high profile places, sort of areas which would be terror sweet spots,"

	Vernik said. "Law enforcement and homeland security personnel need to be trained for this threat, much like more conventional attacks."
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HEADLINE	<b>11/08 US concern: ISIS-K attacks, AQ presence</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/us-says-worried-about-increase-attacks-by-isis-k-afghanistan-2021-11-08/">https://www.reuters.com/world/us-says-worried-about-increase-attacks-by-isis-k-afghanistan-2021-11-08/</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, Nov 8 (Reuters) - The United States is worried about an uptick in attacks by Islamic State's affiliate in Afghanistan and remains deeply concerned about al Qaeda's ongoing presence there, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Tom West said on Monday.</p> <p>West spoke to reporters by telephone from Brussels, where he briefed NATO allies on U.S. talks with the Taliban and held consultations on a "road map" toward recognition of the government that the Islamists formed after their takeover and the U.S. troop pullout in August.</p> <p>"The Taliban have voiced very clearly and openly their desire to normalize relations with the international community, to see a resumption in aid, to see a return of the international diplomatic community to Kabul and to see sanctions relief," he said. "The United States can deliver none of these things on our own."</p> <p>It was West's first on-the-record briefing to reporters since he assumed his post last month.</p> <p>West, who is due to travel on to Pakistan, India and Russia, said the United States is preparing for the next round of talks with the Taliban in Doha, but he did not give a date.</p> <p>With winter approaching, deeply impoverished Afghanistan has emerged from all-out war into a humanitarian crisis. Millions face growing hunger amid soaring food prices, a drought and an economy in freefall, fueled by a hard cash shortage, sanctions on Taliban leaders and a financial aid cutoff.</p> <p>The Taliban also are confronting increasing attacks by their ideological foe, Islamic State-Khorasan Province, or ISIS-K, the regional Islamic State affiliate.</p> <p>West said Washington is "worried about the uptick in ISIS-K attacks, and we want the Taliban to be successful against them. When it comes to other (militant) groups, look, al Qaeda continues to have a presence there that we're very concerned about."</p> <p>Al Qaeda's presence "is an issue of ongoing concern for us in our dialogue with the Taliban," he continued.</p> <p>The 2020 deal that ended the 20-year U.S. military presence in Afghanistan requires the Taliban to bar al Qaeda from recruiting, fund-raising, training or planning attacks.</p> <p>U.S. officials believe that ISIS-K could develop the ability to strike outside of Afghanistan within six to 12 months and that al Qaeda could do the same within one to two years.</p> <p>West said that Washington is not now seriously considering reopening its Kabul embassy, and wants to see the Taliban "establish a record of responsible conduct" before assessing that option.</p> <p>The United States and other countries have criticized the Pashtun-dominated Taliban for excluding leaders of other ethnic groups from the government, preventing women from working and most girls from attending school, and cracking down on human rights and independent media.</p> <p>West noted that Washington and its allies are continuing humanitarian aid. But he said the Biden administration has "not made a decision" on proposals to ease the liquidity crisis being considered by U.N. and nongovernmental humanitarian groups.</p> <p>Those proposals include creating an avenue to get dollars into the country through a private bank to pay public employee salaries that bypasses the Taliban.</p>



## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	11/09 What happened to Sky Metalwala?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/bellevue/still-no-answers-10-years-after-disappearance-of-2-year-old-sky-metalwala/281-4a66d5d0-37a1-418d-8266-5d56b9cb2947">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/bellevue/still-no-answers-10-years-after-disappearance-of-2-year-old-sky-metalwala/281-4a66d5d0-37a1-418d-8266-5d56b9cb2947</a>
GIST	<p>BELLEVUE, Wash. — Ten years have passed and there are still no answers about the disappearance of 2-year-old Sky Metalwala.</p> <p>"It is a big burden and a heartache," said Solomon Metalwala on Tuesday, recalling that day, a decade ago when his two-year-old son vanished.</p> <p>His ex-wife Julia <a href="#">Biryukova told police</a> that her car ran out of gas on the side of a Bellevue road, and that she walked with her daughter to a gas station a mile away to get help, and left 2-year-old Sky behind in the car.</p> <p>The Bellevue Police Department (BPD) would later say the story was not accurate, and the car had gas. Biryukova has not talked to detectives since that day. She and Solomon had been going through a bitter custody battle at the time.</p> <p>"We have asked Julia to come forward and talk to us, provide us with any information that she has. She has not cooperated with us," said BPD Major Debbie Christofferson on Tuesday.</p> <p>BPD released an age-enhanced sketch of Sky to commemorate the 10-year mark of his disappearance and said it's still waiting for a key piece of evidence to crack the case.</p> <p>"We have spent over \$2 million on this case. We have investigated over 2,500 tips, and we have spent over 14,000 hours on this," she said.</p> <p>Biryukova has continued to live in the area, remarrying, later fighting over custody of another child with another ex-husband. She declined to talk, when approached by a reporter in 2019, and has successfully hidden from public view since the story got national attention.</p> <p>On Tuesday, she was due back in a courtroom, this time accused by Redmond Police of third-degree theft and stealing clothes from a Costco back in June. She did not appear via a ZOOM call.</p> <p>Solomon said, despite the lack of a concrete answer and his frustration over time, he still remains hopeful that Sky is still alive.</p> <p>"There's no evidence that says that he's not," Solomon said. "So I still kind of stand on that and to keep myself going."</p> <p>He hopes somebody, somewhere, will see the age-progressed photo or that even Sky could think, "You know, there's something a little different about me, I don't really act like my brothers, I don't really look like my brothers and sisters, or my parents. I think that's what I'm really hoping for."</p> <p>He adds that he's often reflected on that period, and the days leading up to the disappearance, and says now, "Really, spend time with your kids. Time is too short. You never know when will be the last day that you will see your loved ones."</p>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nbcrightnow.com/news/state/spokane-county-sheriff-says-he-got-his-moneys-worth-from-misspelled-times-square-ad/article_59ce5579-54b3-504a-a4db-9243f6a60e7c.html">https://www.nbcrightnow.com/news/state/spokane-county-sheriff-says-he-got-his-moneys-worth-from-misspelled-times-square-ad/article_59ce5579-54b3-504a-a4db-9243f6a60e7c.html</a>
GIST	<p>(The Center Square) – Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich thinks the Spokane County Sheriff’s Office got the better end of the deal in spending \$12,000 for two days of billboard advertising in Times Square in New York City to recruit deputies.</p> <p>That’s in spite of – or perhaps even because of – all the media attention the Big Apple campaign garnered due to a misspelling in the advertisement. “Washington” was originally spelled “Washinton,” before the ad agency responsible quickly corrected the typo.</p> <p>That amounted to lots of free publicity generated, Knezovich admitted, which seems to be paying off in the form of 10 New York City police officers contacting the Sheriff’s Office about its hiring process.</p> <p>“We’re very aggressive in what we do,” Knezovich said of his strategy to recruit deputies to his shorthanded department, including offering \$15,000 hiring bonuses.</p> <p>The Times Square ad follows the Sheriff’s Office taking out billboards in Seattle, Portland, Denver and Austin, Texas.</p> <p>Knezovich said he placed the billboards in cities where elected officials have not supported their law enforcement agencies and people.</p> <p>Plans call for billboards in Southern California, Knezovich said.</p> <p>Altogether, he said his office needs to fill 30 positions.</p> <p>“We have to hire 20 deputies to get to required staffing levels,” Knezovich said, with another 10 to be hired to fill anticipated vacancies next year.</p> <p>Deputies have been working lots of overtime, the sheriff said, noting mandated overtime was close to becoming a reality.</p> <p>The Spokane County Sheriff’s Office currently has 235 commissioned personnel, from the sheriff to the newest deputy.</p> <p>Around the country, many law enforcement agencies are experiencing staffing shortages.</p> <p>“The biggest reason we’re in this predicament – and this is a nationwide problem – is because of 2020,” Knezovich said before making an oblique reference to the highly publicized killing of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota, during an arrest in May 2020 that sparked violent civil unrest in cities across the country.</p> <p>The officer has since been convicted of murder.</p> <p>Knezovich blamed “high-velocity media and activist politicians” for fanning the flames in the wake of Floyd’s death and characterizing police officers as “evil, racist, white supremacists.”</p> <p>The next generation of young people don’t want to become police officers, Knezovich explained, which is why he is focusing on lateral hires.</p> <p>With fewer people wanting to become police officers, Knezovich – among other law enforcement officials – has focused on luring police away from other agencies, including some in Washington state.</p> <p>Sweeping COVID-19 mandates by Gov. Jay Inslee that went into effect on October 18 have resulted in the Washington State Patrol losing 74 commissioned officers, including 67 troopers, six sergeants and one captain, according to a next-day <a href="#">press release</a>.</p>

Six Seattle Police Department employees were let go, with 103 waiting on religious and medical exemptions, [officials said](#).

“We don’t have mandates,” Knezovich, who is vaccinated, said.

He has indicated he is not seeking out unvaccinated officers.

Another factor in retention and recruiting woes for the Sheriff’s Department, according to Knezovich, are police reforms passed by the legislature and signed into law by Inslee earlier this year.

The measures, among other things, ban chokeholds, neck restraints and no-knock warrants, as well as restricting when police officers can engage in car chases and requiring police to exhaust appropriate de-escalation tactics.

“They made it more difficult,” he said of the laws’ impact on keeping deputies on the force.

Knezovich described his recruiting methods as fiscally sound – that is, within the department’s budget. Down 30 deputies right now, he explained that money that was otherwise unspent helped pay for the campaign to lure away police from other departments, including hiring bonuses, renting billboard space, and social media efforts.

“It cost citizens nothing but money that was already budgeted,” Knezovich said, adding that he’s always run the Sheriff’s Office as a business.

The department has a \$140,000 annual recruiting budget.

Knezovich said he firmly believes in staying within budget, adding that people in government who are against spending caps “have lost their minds.”

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HEADLINE	11/09 NASA Mars helicopter back; better
SOURCE	<a href="https://arstechnica.com/science/2021/11/nasas-stalwart-mars-helicopter-is-back-and-better-than-ever/">https://arstechnica.com/science/2021/11/nasas-stalwart-mars-helicopter-is-back-and-better-than-ever/</a>
GIST	<p>Nearly seven months have passed since NASA's <i>Ingenuity</i> helicopter made its first <a href="#">groundbreaking flight</a> on Mars.</p> <p>Since that initial tentative hovering above the surface of Mars, <i>Ingenuity</i> has <a href="#">flown a progression</a> of longer, more significant, and scientifically important flights. It has flown as far as 625 meters in a single flight, as high as 12 meters, and for a duration of as long as 169.5 seconds.</p> <p>But in September the small flying vehicle faced a growing threat from a thinning atmosphere due to seasonal variation. NASA's Perseverance mission had landed in Jezero Crater, in the northern hemisphere of Mars, during the planet's late winter in February. But since then summer has come on, and the density of Mars' atmosphere has fallen from about 1.5 percent that of Earth's atmosphere to 1.0 percent. For a helicopter already pushing the limits of flying in a thin atmosphere, this represented a significant decline.</p> <p>NASA engineers devised a plan to compensate by increasing the rotation rate of <i>Ingenuity</i>'s blades from a little more than 2,500 rpm to about 2,800 rpm. An initial flight test at a higher rotation rate, <a href="#">in September</a>, raised concerns after <i>Ingenuity</i> failed to take off. Was this the end for a helicopter that had already survived far longer than its design life?</p> <p>No, it was not. After engineers <a href="#">diagnosed a problem</a> with the helicopter's small flight control motors and implemented a solution, <i>Ingenuity</i> was ready to try again. On October 24, <i>Ingenuity</i> executed a short flight at 2,700 rpm, rising about 5 meters and moving a horizontal distance of about 2 meters. This successful test gave engineers more confidence in trying a longer flight in Mars' thinner atmosphere at a higher rpm.</p>

That happened this week, when *Ingenuity* completed its 15th overall flight on Mars, flying 128.8 seconds and about 400 meters across the surface of Mars. This flight proves that *Ingenuity* is capable of flying on Mars even in the thinnest atmosphere and sets the stage for future low-density-atmosphere scouting missions to check out scientifically interesting areas.

Cumulatively, *Ingenuity* has now flown more than 3 km across the surface of Mars—more than five times farther than NASA had hoped to demonstrate with this technology. It's safe to say that flying on other worlds, with atmospheres, will be more than just a passing fad for future exploratory missions. Rather, it likely represents the future.

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HEADLINE	11/09 Study: extreme urban heat exposure jumps
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2021/11/09/extreme-heat-exposure-urban-climate/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2021/11/09/extreme-heat-exposure-urban-climate/</a>
GIST	<p>Over the past 40 years, as climate change leaped into global awareness, exposure to extreme heat jumped by close to 200 percent in more than 10,000 of the world's biggest urban areas, according to a study <a href="#">published in October</a> in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.</p> <p>Increases in dangerously high temperature and humidity were responsible for roughly a third of the global boost in exposure, while increased population accounted for the rest.</p> <p>The study adds vivid context to the threats posed by a human-warmed planet, and to the challenges facing delegates at the United Nations climate summit taking place in Glasgow, Scotland.</p> <p>Led by Cascade Tuholske, a postdoctoral researcher at Columbia University's Earth Institute, the study used new fine-grained data sets to analyze the geographic overlap between urban growth and dangerous combinations of temperature and humidity.</p> <p>"Many of the fastest-warming cities are in the humid tropics," said Tuholske in an email.</p> <p>The study analyzed 13,115 urban areas over the period from 1983 to 2016. Collective heat exposure was assessed in terms of person-days, or the number of days above a particular threshold in each city multiplied by the number of people affected.</p> <p>The extreme heat was assessed by using day-to-day peaks in <a href="#">wet bulb globe temperature</a>, or WBGT (max), a metric that takes into account humidity, sunlight and wind, in addition to temperature. The measure is considered particularly dangerous when it exceeds 86 degrees.</p> <p>Using the 86-degree WBGT (max) threshold, the authors found that collective exposure to extreme heat and humidity across the cities studied soared from around 40 billion person-days in 1983 to 119 billion in 2016. Close to half of the cities studied showed increases in exposure that were statistically significant.</p> <p>Higher WBGT (max) readings were the main culprit behind the exposure increase in many areas, including much of India. In a few other parts of the world, including East Africa, exposure climbed mainly due to population.</p> <p><b>Evidence piles up on climate change and heat</b></p> <p>The new study by Tuholske and colleagues joins a rapidly growing body of work on the impact of extreme heat and how climate change will exacerbate the problem. The World Weather Attribution project <a href="#">concluded</a> that July's deadly, record-smashing heat wave over the U.S. Pacific Northwest and southwest Canada would have been "virtually impossible without human-caused climate change."</p> <p>There is high confidence that heat waves over land have become more intense and frequent across most of the world, according to the latest <a href="#">Working Group I assessment</a>, released in August by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).</p>

Cities are at particular risk. “Compared to present day, large implications are expected from the combination of future urban development and more frequent occurrence of extreme climate events, such as heat waves, with more hot days and warm nights adding to heat stress in cities,” said the IPCC.

By late century, [billions of people](#) could be experiencing annual average temperatures now found only in the world’s hottest cities, such as Bangkok, and heat on some days could reach [virtually unsurvivable levels](#) in a growing number of locations.

A [recent study](#) led by Cassandra Rogers at Washington State University found that some of the world’s largest increases over the past four decades in “humid heat” — extreme heat coupled with relatively high humidity — have been in South and Southeast Asia and in the southeastern United States. “These increases are concentrated over densely populated regions in the tropics and subtropics, where humid-heat levels are already high,” said Rogers and colleagues.

Across the planet’s cities, extreme heat is increasing because of global-scale warming from greenhouse gases together with the urban heat island effect, the tendency of built-up areas to absorb and retain heat. Tuholske and colleagues did not attempt to separate out the two effects in their analysis, but they acknowledged that both are involved.

“The global approach of this paper is very powerful to highlight the scope of the problem and the intensity with which it has been increasing,” said Koen Tieskens, a Boston University research scientist in environmental health. “In terms of health consequences, it is even more worrying, as within cities those most vulnerable to extreme heat tend to live in the hottest parts with the least protection.”

### **Moving where heat risk is growing**

It’s clear that people are continuing to migrate toward some of the world’s most heat-vulnerable areas. In the United States, the 2020 census showed that, among the 10 largest cities, the [three fastest-growing](#) were Phoenix, Houston and Dallas — which also happen to be three of the nation’s hottest big cities.

Meanwhile, in the developing world, economic imperatives are pushing people toward cities, many of them increasingly heat-vulnerable.

“I don’t think [extreme heat] will stem the flow of rural migrants to urban areas in rapidly urbanizing low- and middle-income countries,” said Tuholske. He stressed the need to learn more about migration patterns and dynamics.

Kristie Ebi, a professor at the University of Washington’s Center for Health and the Global Environment, said that the analysis in Tuholske’s study can help guide efforts to introduce interventions in the most vulnerable areas.

“Understanding the relative contributions can better target heat action plans,” she wrote in an email. “Having a globally accurate map of the intersection of urban populations and extreme heat adds to understanding of regions at higher risk during heat waves, particularly regions with limited data.”

There’s a need to drill even deeper on variations within cities themselves, said Patricia Fabian, an associate professor at Boston University who welcomed the new study.

“In our community heat studies, we’ve recorded differences of seven degrees Fahrenheit within a couple city blocks when comparing temperatures at a park versus the downtown area,” said Fabian in an email.

Fabian stressed the importance of better understanding geographic variations in how urban residents respond to heat physiologically, as well as other factors that influence a person’s heat vulnerability, including their mobility, occupation, housing quality, access to air-conditioning and ability to pay utility bills.

	<p>Since the 1990s, many cities across the world, especially in richer nations, have implemented safety measures such as cooling centers and programs to check on vulnerable residents. These have likely helped to keep the toll from heat exposure from growing as fast as it otherwise might have.</p> <p>Such innovations won't always work in poorer cities unless they are planned and carried out thoughtfully, according to Tuholske.</p> <p>"Building cooling centers is a great tool, yet if people cannot access them because they have to work on hot days to feed their families, then they are useless," said Tuholske. "We also need policies — like occupational heat health standards — that address the structural problems that lead to exposure."</p> <p>Knowing what we know, Tuholske added, "no one should die from extreme heat exposure."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/10 Pandemic plastic waste contamination</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/10/plastic-waste-coronavirus-ocean-contamination/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/10/plastic-waste-coronavirus-ocean-contamination/</a>
GIST	<p>Some 8 million metric tons of pandemic-related plastic waste have been created by 193 countries, about 26,000 tons of which are now in the world's oceans, where they threaten to disrupt marine life and further pollute beaches, a recent study found.</p> <p>The findings, by a group of researchers based in China and the United States, were <a href="#">published</a> this month in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences journal. Concerns had been raised since the start of the <a href="#">coronavirus</a> pandemic that there would be a boom in plastic pollution amid heightened use of personal protective equipment and rapid growth in online commerce. The study is among the first to quantify the scale of plastic waste linked to the health crisis.</p> <p>The cost of the increase in plastic waste has been keenly felt by wildlife. As of July, there were 61 recorded instances of animals being killed or disrupted by pandemic-linked plastic waste, according to a Dutch scientist-founded <a href="#">tracking project</a>. Among the widely publicized examples are an American robin that was found wrapped up in a face mask in Canada and the body of a perch wrapped in the thumb of a disposable medical glove that was found by Dutch volunteers; National Geographic <a href="#">called</a> the latter the first documented instance of a fish being killed by a glove.</p> <p>Although only about 30 percent of all covid cases were detected in Asia as of late August, the region was responsible for 72 percent of global plastic discharge, the study found. The researchers said this was due to higher use of disposable protective equipment, as well as lower levels of waste treatment in countries such as China and India. By contrast, developed economies in North America and Europe that were badly hit by the coronavirus produced relatively little pandemic plastic waste.</p> <p>The situation was worsened by the suspension or relaxation of restrictions on single-use plastic products globally. New York state's ban on single-use plastic bags, which took effect in spring 2020, was only enforced that fall.</p> <p>"Better management of medical waste in epicenters, especially in developing countries, is necessary," the researchers wrote, while also calling for the development of more environmentally friendly materials.</p> <p>"Governments should also mount public information campaigns not only regarding the proper collection and management of pandemic-related plastic waste, but also their judicial use," said Von Hernandez, global coordinator of Break Free From Plastic, an advocacy group. "This includes advocating the use of reusable masks and PPEs for the general public ... especially if one is not working in the front lines."</p> <p>Much plastic waste enters the world's oceans via major rivers, according to the researchers, who found that the three waterways most polluted by pandemic-associated plastic were all in Asia: The Shatt al-Arab feeds into the Persian Gulf; the Indus River empties into the Arabian Sea; and the Yangtze River flows to the East China Sea.</p>



	<p>"Given that the world is still grappling with COVID 19, we expect that the environmental and public health threats associated with pandemic related plastic waste would likely increase.</p> <p>The study said that the leading contributor of plastic discharged into oceans was medical waste generated by hospitals, which accounted for over 70 percent of such pollution. Scraps of online shopping packaging were particularly high in Asia, though it had a relatively small impact on global discharge.</p> <p>Modeling by the scientists indicates that the vast majority of plastic waste produced as a result of the pandemic will end up either on sea beds or beaches by the end of the century. In addition to becoming possible death traps for coastal animals, plastic buildup on beaches can <a href="#">increase</a> the surrounding temperature, making the environment less hospitable to wildlife. And as plastic degrades over time, toxic chemicals <a href="#">may be released</a> and moved up the food chain.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Rise of copper: clean energy dark side</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/09/copper-mining-reveals-clean-energy-dark-side">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/09/copper-mining-reveals-clean-energy-dark-side</a>
GIST	<p>Corky Stewart, a retired geologist, and his wife live in a rural subdivision in New Mexico's Grant county, about a mile north of the sprawling Tyrone copper mine.</p> <p>"We've been here three years and we've heard four blasts," Stewart said of the mine, one of four on an expanse of land partitioned into dozens of four-acre lots. From his perspective, the blasts don't seem unreasonable, given that a mining company owns the property and has the right to do what it wants.</p> <p>But he didn't know when he bought the property that the company would propose a new pit called the Emma B just a half-mile from the wells he and his wife depend on for drinking water. "If they were to somehow tap into our aquifer and drain our water supply, then our houses become valueless," he said.</p> <p>"We're not making any effort to prevent the pit from being built," he said. "All we're really asking is for them to give us some commitment that they will fix whatever they do to our water supply." But the mine, owned by the company Freeport-McMoRan, refuses to give them this assurance, he said. Freeport-McMoRan did not respond to multiple requests for comment by New Mexico In Depth and the Guardian.</p> <p>The company's effort to expand comes as the US expects to invest in energy sources that are cleaner than fossil fuels, and the global demand for copper rises. Copper conducts electricity, bends easily, and is recyclable – which makes it a critical material for most forms of renewable energy, from wind and solar to electric vehicles.</p> <p>But when "clean energy" relies on the extraction of metals like copper, it can also pollute the surrounding environment.</p> <p>While Freeport-McMoRan touts sustainability practices and other measures taken to reduce the company's own greenhouse gas emissions, there's little doubt that copper mining poses significant risks to communities on the ground, threatening everything from water access to air quality to Indigenous cultural sites.</p> <p>Companies dig huge holes into the ground, going deeper than the water table. Heavy machinery kicks up dust, polluting the air. Chemicals are used to leach the mineral out of ore, and exposed water is forever contaminated. Some operations, like Freeport's Tyrone mine, will have to pump water in perpetuity, even after there is no longer copper to be found, so that contaminated water from the mine site doesn't flow back into the wider water table.</p> <p>Chris Berry, an <a href="#">independent analyst</a> focused on energy metals, said the push for clean energy is a big reason for increased demand for copper, which is estimated to grow by <a href="#">350% by 2050</a> if the world moves towards clean energy. Its price nearly doubled from 2019 to 2020 in the US.</p>



That's partly because copper's role in the transition to clean energy cannot be overstated. "We're really going to have to re-engineer the electricity grid to make it cleaner and greener and more efficient. And that's going to take a lot more copper, and copper mining."

This reality puts environmentalists like Allyson Siwik, executive director of the Gila Resources Information Project, a local environmental advocacy organization in Grant county, in a tricky spot. "We are trying to transition to a clean energy economy, right?" said Siwik. "So we obviously are very supportive of that." However, she adds, "the increase in global demand for these metals is very disconcerting to me. You know, it's frontline communities like us here in Grant county that bear the cost of the increased exploration, expansion of mining."

Tucked away in rural areas of Grant county in south-western New Mexico, the vast Chino and Tyrone copper mines owned by Freeport-McMoRan don't garner much attention in the state's metropolitan center. But the state ranks third in copper production nationally, and the mines [employ](#) more than 1,300 people. As demand for copper increases, local employment could grow.

Freeport-McMoRan is betting on it.

The company's 2020 annual report estimates that the demand for copper will double in the next five years as a result of growth in electric vehicles and renewable technology.

"There is an increased interest to mine copper at both existing and proposed mines to support clean energy," Holland Shepherd, manager of the mining act reclamation program at New Mexico's department of energy, minerals, and natural resources, said in an email.

In Sierra county, another mining company is proposing to reboot the Copper Flat mine, which briefly operated in the early 1980s before prices fell and it shut down. Themac Resources is applying for a 12-year mining permit, which also requires acquisition of enough water rights to satisfy state regulators.

Nearby, residents of the village of Hillsboro are concerned.

"We depend on our wells here in town for all our water," said Gary Gritzbaugh, who has lived in Hillsboro for 25 years and is the president of the Hillsboro Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association. The small water association serves 80 to 90 customers and has operated for more than half a century. "It is a good system," he said, but he's deeply concerned that the mine will drain or contaminate their wells.

Gritzbaugh said that while engineers from the mining company reassured the town that contaminated water from the mine won't reach Hillsboro's water supply, he isn't certain. "Groundwater is just an underground river, it goes wherever it wants to go. People say, well, it's not going to drain this way, it's going to drain towards Rio Grande. Well, maybe, maybe not."

For environmentalists set on reducing carbon emissions, there are no easy solutions to the threat that mining for copper and other essential minerals poses for communities like Hillsboro or rural residents like Stewart.

Noah Long, the western region director of the climate and clean energy program at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said that without an energy transition, there will be devastating consequences, some of which are already surfacing. "We can't afford to wait," he said. But he noted the need for adequate regulation of mines, as well as reusing and then recycling electric vehicle batteries.

Establishing a market to recycle electric vehicle batteries – which can last a dozen or more years – could help reduce demand for copper and rein in mining operations in areas like New Mexico, where copper ore is abundant.

“We need to shift to a policy that creates clear incentives for recycling,” said Aimee Boulanger, the executive director of the [Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance](#). She noted that extracting metals is now more profitable than recycling them.

In 2020, an estimated [35% of copper](#) was recycled in the US, and about a third of total global demand is [met](#) with recycled copper. But electric vehicle battery recycling is minimal. Electric vehicle batteries contain copper, nickel, cobalt and lithium; of these, cobalt and nickel are usually recoverable for new batteries, but lithium and copper are captured for use in other industries or products, or lost in the process.

When lead-acid batteries came into the picture in 1859, they were rarely recycled – but now they are easily broken down for reuse. This could be the [blueprint](#) for electric vehicle batteries. China has already issued [provisional regulations](#) that encourage manufacturers to set up networks for collecting and recycling used batteries. The EU has a [drafted act](#) that tackles sustainable batteries.

If electric vehicles are the alternative to oil-guzzling cars, then their impact – from the mining and extraction of raw materials needed to build them to managing the waste from that process – should be addressed, said Boulanger. “And we need to make sure that we’re working to reduce that impact.”

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Encouraging automakers and electronics companies to work with suppliers who source minerals responsibly is also important, environmentalists say. At the end of the day, such mines won’t ever be 100% safe, said Siwik, who recently joined Indigenous tribes and environmental groups calling on the federal government to revise hardrock mining regulations.

“We need to demand the maximum amount of environmental protection, that mines are following best management practices and being as protective as possible.” That means lining stockpiles, preventing toxic pollutants from entering groundwater, mitigating air quality impacts, and ensuring that mines reclaim the land as soon as a particular mining area is used up.

Encouraging automakers and electronics companies to work with suppliers who source minerals responsibly is also important.

Siwik suggests an accreditation standard awarded by the Initiative for Responsible [Mining Assurance](#) (IRMA) for scoring companies’ mining practices.

IRMA was developed independently of other standards adopted by mining industry associations. It uses public audits based on social and environmental responsibility, business integrity, and what it calls “planning for positive legacies” to measure performance. The results, reviewed by an independent auditor, are released with details about the mining operation, visited facilities and interviews that the auditors conducted with company representatives from across different departments.

The public audit covers “everything from protecting Indigenous people’s rights, to biodiversity and water, to worker health and safety”, said Boulanger. IRMA has already conducted public audits of a platinum mine in Zimbabwe and a lead-zinc mine in Mexico.

Tiffany’s, BMW and Ford Motors have already committed to sourcing responsibly, so if a mine wants to be a part of these supply chains, they would have to adhere to high standards, said Boulanger.

But environmentalists worry that copper mining giants in New Mexico will be reluctant to follow such standards.

Last year, Freeport-McMoRan [announced](#) its commitment to another standard, the Copper Mark Responsible Production Framework. Designed specifically for copper operations, it was developed by the International Copper Association, an influential trade group. This standard does not give governance and voting power to affected communities, organized labor, non-governmental environment or human rights organizations, like IRMA’s multi-stakeholder system does. But Copper Mark does issue reports based on sustainability standards. And according to Shepherd, of the state energy, minerals, and natural resources

	<p>department, the Copper Mark and another standard created by the industry-led Council on Mining and Metals are both good.</p> <p>But communities affected by mine operations are often skeptical of data and reports provided by industry.</p> <p>When the company assures him that the water polluted by the proposed Emma B mine won't reach his water wells, Stewart is unconvinced. "It's the mine providing the data, right?" he said. "They're the ones paying an expert and you know, if you want an expert to say something, [you can] just pay him money."</p> <p>Once the company has the permit, the only recourse residents like Stewart would have in the event of water contamination would be suing in court, which takes significant financial resources, he said.</p> <p>"I can't afford to hire my own hydrology firm and lawyers and all this," says Stewart.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/08 October 2021 6<sup>th</sup> warmest on record</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.noaa.gov/news/october-2021-was-sixth-warmest-on-record-for-us">https://www.noaa.gov/news/october-2021-was-sixth-warmest-on-record-for-us</a>
GIST	<p>October 2021 was an unusually balmy month for the contiguous U.S., as several states recorded their warmest October on record.</p> <p>Abundant Pacific moisture also dumped excessive rainfall over the western U.S. that created hazardous flood conditions in some places but helped snuff out some wildfire activity in the West.</p> <p>Here are more highlights from NOAA's latest monthly U.S. climate report:  <b>Climate by the numbers</b></p> <p><b>October 2021</b>  The average October temperature across the contiguous U.S. was 57.0 degrees F, 2.9 degrees above the 20th-century average, making it the sixth-warmest October in 127 years.</p> <p>Several states ranked even higher on record for heat. Maryland and Ohio had their warmest October on record, while Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island each saw their second-warmest October.</p> <p>The average precipitation was 3.11 inches — 0.95 of an inch above average — making it the ninth-wettest October.</p> <p>Above-average precipitation was observed across parts of the West, Plains, Great Lakes, Midwest, Southeast and Northeast. California and Illinois both saw their fourth-wettest October on record.</p> <p><b>Year to date (YTD)   January through October 2021</b>  The average U.S. temperature for the YTD was 57.0 degrees F, 2.0 degrees above the 20th-century average, making it the ninth-warmest such period in the climate record.</p> <p>Maine saw its second-warmest YTD on record, while New Hampshire and Vermont had their third warmest. In contrast, temperatures this year so far ran below average across parts of the Deep South.</p> <p>The U.S. precipitation total for the YTD was 26.74 inches — 1.38 inches above average — which placed in the wettest third of the record. Massachusetts and Mississippi had a third-wettest YTD, while Louisiana saw its fourth wettest.</p> <p>Precipitation was below average across portions of the West, northern Plains, Great Lakes and New England. Montana saw its fourth-driest YTD on record.</p> <p><b>Other notable climate events in October</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pacific Northwest smacked by record <a href="#">bomb cyclone</a>:</b> An all-time record low pressure system for the region developed in the eastern Pacific and strengthened rapidly on October 24, generating hurricane force winds and wave heights up to 45 feet off the coast of Washington and Oregon. Wind gusts toppled trees and knocked out power around the Seattle metro area and Puget Sound.</li> <li>• <b>Atmospheric river deluged the West Coast:</b> Conveyor belts of Pacific moisture, known as atmospheric rivers, impacted much of the central West Coast from October 19-26. On October 24, a Category 5 (exceptional) atmospheric river event brought record rainfall to portions of central California. Sacramento, Blue Canyon and Santa Rosa each reported their wettest 24-hour period on record. The heavy rain near wildfire burn scars triggered multiple landslides, but helped to partially quench the wildfire season and drought severity across parts of the West.</li> <li>• <b>Tornadoes touched down:</b> Preliminary tornado counts across the U.S. during October were the second most on record for the month with a count of 146. Only preliminary counts in 2018 ranked higher with 159 tornadoes reported. Oklahoma reported a record 31 tornadoes for October, which exceeds the previous record of 27 set in 1998.</li> </ul>
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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	11/09 Explosives laboratory in Arlington home
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/explosives-laboratory-underground-bunker-found-at-arlington-home-when-swat-team-responds-to-shooting">https://www.q13fox.com/news/explosives-laboratory-underground-bunker-found-at-arlington-home-when-swat-team-responds-to-shooting</a>
GIST	<p><b>ARLINGTON, Wash.</b> - A homemade explosives laboratory and an underground bunker were discovered at an Arlington home after police responded to the scene of what turned out to be a minor shooting.</p> <p>On Nov. 4, Snohomish County Sheriff's Deputies were called to a home in the 19300 block of Burn Road for reports of a shooting. During the investigation, deputies learned that a 40-year-old victim and the 42-year-old suspect got into a fight outside the suspect's home when he made verbal threats to kill the victim. He fired one round through the victim's windshield, hitting his hand.</p> <p>When law enforcement arrived at the home for the reported shooting, the suspect locked himself inside his residence and refused to come out.</p> <p>Several hours later, a SWAT team was able to negotiate with the suspect to surrender. He was taken into custody without incident.</p> <p>Later that day, deputies executed a search warrant at the man's home to find the gun used in the shooting.</p> <p>When they got inside, they found what appeared to be an "explosives lab." After getting a new search warrant for the explosives, bomb technicians found the homemade explosives laboratory, an underground bunker, improvised explosive devices, homemade explosives, several firearms, as well as multiple "hazardous materials."</p> <p>Bomb squad technicians assisted with a controlled destruction of the explosives on-site at the Burn Road location from Nov. 5-6.</p> <p>The suspect has been charged with first-degree assault, felony harassment-threats to kill, unlawful possession of a firearm, possession of explosive devices and manufacturing explosives without a license.</p> <p>He is being held at the Snohomish County Jail on \$1 million bail.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/09 Angry, destructive: Capitol rioters
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-vb/2021/11/09/rioters-charges-arrests-jan-6-insurrection/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-vb/2021/11/09/rioters-charges-arrests-jan-6-insurrection/</a>

## GIST

Thomas Sibick was a star lacrosse player at his military boarding school. While court records show he has struggled with drugs and engaged in reckless and disorderly conduct, he pulled himself together, found a career in elder care and recently got a master's degree in business administration. The son of a Navy captain, he mentored his brother through acceptance to the U.S. Naval Academy.

But during the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, prosecutors allege, he ripped the badge and radio from a D.C. police officer who had been pulled into a frenzied crowd, which assaulted the officer until he passed out.

Several dozen of those charged with storming the U.S. Capitol explicitly prepared for violence in the effort to thwart Congress's confirmation of Joe Biden's election that day, according to court records. Some arrived in combat gear, wearing the logos of self-styled militias or violent right-wing clubs. More than 30 of those charged in the Capitol attack face felony conspiracy charges, according to an analysis of court records by The Washington Post.

But court records show that the vast majority of the roughly 650 people federally charged in the riot were not part of far-right groups or premeditated conspiracies to attack the Capitol. Rather, many were an array of everyday Americans that included community leaders, small-business owners, teachers and yoga instructors. One wore his work badge, another a jacket with his phone number on the back. About 573 have no known affiliation with an extremist group, according to a Post analysis of court filings and public records as of Nov 3. Federal prosecutors have not identified serious criminal records in the cases of most suspects, although at least a dozen defendants have been accused or convicted of domestic violence.

In sentencing a man accused of illegally demonstrating in the building, Chief Judge Beryl A. Howell last month suggested all participants should face more serious charges.

"Countless videos show the mob that attacked the Capitol was violent. Everyone participating in the mob contributed to that violence," she said, adding that the harm went beyond the immediate deaths and destruction to include "the damage to the reputation of our democracy, which is usually held up around the world."

More than 120 people have pleaded guilty to about 130 charges related to the Capitol riot. There are about 530 other people facing more than 2,500 other charges.

A majority of the ongoing charges leveled against defendants are misdemeanors. More than half of the people charged face at least one felony.

A law enforcement official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation, said that while many in the FBI underestimated the desperation, anger and conspiratorial nature of the crowd, the evidence gathered to date shows the vast majority of participants "didn't have a plan" to overthrow the government: "They didn't know what they were doing. A lot of them didn't even know where they were going. But they had a message, and the message was, the pitchfork people will show up again, and you need to be afraid of us."

The sheer number of people in the crowd overwhelmed police on Jan. 6, fueling a rampage. Five people died in the attack or in the immediate aftermath. In all, investigators estimate that more than 2,000 people entered the Capitol, many whipped up by President Donald Trump's false claims that the election was rigged and that Vice President Mike Pence could halt the process and overturn the results.

"Once we found out Pence turned on us ... the crowd went crazy," an Alabama landscaper said two days after the riot, in a YouTube video cited in government filings. "I mean, it became a mob. We crossed the gate."

Video evidence indicates that nearly 140 officers collectively weathered 1,000 assaults, according to prosecutors. Nine months after the attack, an FBI website showed photographs of about 350 suspects

who have not been arrested for Capitol violence. Of more than 130 people charged with assaulting, resisting and impeding police, less than 10 are purported to be affiliated with or identify as members of organized groups such as the Oath Keepers or Proud Boys, according to a Post review of arrests and court documents. Small, angry groups formed one large mob in mere minutes, joined by common purpose.

“A riot cannot occur without rioters, and each rioter’s actions — from the most mundane to the most violent — contributed, directly and indirectly, to the violence and destruction of that day,” federal prosecutors have written in multiple sentencing arguments.

How was it that — as one federal judge asked during the plea hearing for a 59-year-old CrossFit trainer who talked about shooting House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) in the head — “good people who never got into trouble with the law” on Jan. 6 had “morphed into terrorists”?

Brian Levin, who runs the Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism at California State University, said that in the right circumstances, even among those with weak attachment to extremist views can turn violent.

“Responsibility gets diffused across the group, and you have the immediate lure of peer validation, plus a cloak of anonymity,” he said. “It’s almost like a sport.”

Fiona Hill, who served on the National Security Council in the Trump administration, said that in her home country of Britain, police had success stopping violence and rioting that had often erupted around soccer games by identifying and removing key instigators.

“It’s hard when the person who was inciting it happens to be the sitting president of the United States,” she noted. “Makes it a bit difficult for the police to extricate him.”

Sibick had never been to a Trump rally before Jan. 6, according to his defense attorney Stephen Brennwald, who said at a recent hearing that “there is nothing in his life before this that would indicate a propensity for violence.”

“He’s just not that person,” Brennwald added.

Yet, as D.C. police officer Michael Fanone lay on the ground, drifting in and out of consciousness after being beaten and shocked with a stun gun by other members of the mob, Sibick reached in and stripped him of his badge and radio, according to body-camera footage submitted in court.

“Just got tear-gassed, but we’re good, baby, we’re good! We’re pushing forward now!” Sibick shouted hoarsely in an Instagram post found by law enforcement.

Sibick says he was attempting to help Fanone. He has pleaded not guilty to assaulting a police officer, robbery and related crimes. Prosecutors allege that he repeatedly lied about his actions, and say that he could not have accidentally removed the officer’s badge and radio.

Though most Jan. 6 rioters were not affiliated with extremist groups, prosecutors say members of the Three Percenters, Oath Keepers and Proud Boys all girded for violent action in advance. Some Proud Boys, prosecutors say, were among the first to tear down barricades and attack police. At least 77 defendants were purportedly affiliated with those far-right groups, according to the Post analysis.

One member of the Proud Boys expressed surprise at their influence in the insurrection, telling others in a text message: “That was NOT what I expected to happen today. All from us ... getting the normies all riled up.” Prosecutors discounted that member’s role in any charged conspiracy.

But there were also newer extremist groups in the mix — including several motivated by pandemic restrictions. A California yoga instructor named Alan Hostetter founded the American Phoenix Project

in response to coronavirus lockdowns. In a December 2020 video, according to court records, he declared that the election was stolen and that “execution is the just punishment for the ringleaders of this coup.” He has pleaded not guilty to conspiring with five other Californians to recruit ‘armed fighters’ and obstruct the vote count.

The roughly two dozen riot defendants who have been sentenced so far have given apologies ranging from grudging to abject. While many have formally accepted responsibility, few have elucidated their motivations. It is not defendants’ political loyalty or passion that is being punished, judges said, but their willingness to impede the peaceful transfer of power, participate in an attack on the operations of Congress and serve the interests of one person, the former president, instead of democracy and the law.

“Democracies die, and we’ve seen it happen in the past when citizens rise up against their government and take part in the kinds of events that took place on January 6,” U.S. District Judge Reggie B. Walton said at one sentencing. “We’re tearing our country apart.”

One defendant, Robert Reeder of Harford County, Md., is a registered Democrat who told FBI agents he found the former president distasteful. But he liked the message of “Make America Great Again,” and after the election, he touted groundless claims of fraud on Facebook.

“Civil war is coming,” he wrote in December. “This time the conservatives will stand their ground and the radicals will die.”

He later said he only decided to attend Trump’s rally that morning. He had never been to a protest before.

“I wasn’t with anyone; I didn’t have any battle gear,” Reeder said in an interview with FBI agents. “The only thing in my backpack was two protein bars.”

Reeder told the FBI that he did not see himself as part of the mob that fought its way into the Capitol, even though he entered the building twice, going through tear gas and pepper balls and engaging physically with police officers, according to court filings.

“This is not me,” he told the agents, “and yet here we are.”

That night, he called his brother and said “how bad he felt about being there,” David Reeder testified at sentencing in early October. He said his brother wasn’t one of the “wack jobs.” The family was “appalled by his participation,” his brother said, but a harsh punishment would also be “appalling.”

Reeder — who pleaded guilty to demonstrating in the Capitol — apologized profusely at sentencing, calling the riot “disgusting” and his actions “shameful, inexcusable.” When pressed by U.S. District Judge Thomas F. Hogan of Washington, Reeder admitted to shoving a police officer but said it was an accidental response to getting hit.

The judge, calling his account “disingenuous” and “prevaricating,” sentenced Reeder to three months in jail.

Reeder was not simply swept along by events, the judge said.

“It’s become evident to me in the riot cases, the post-riot cases, that many of the defendants who are pleading guilty are not truly accepting responsibility,” Hogan said. Reeder was present for large stretches of the riot and would have heard alarms, felt pepper spray and seen people pushing and charging in to police, the judge added: “It’s rewriting history and the facts to say you didn’t know what was going on. ... I’ve had too many people say that to me.”



Still, supporters of the Jan. 6 defendants have escalated claims that they are being punished for their political beliefs. Pence said recently that the media's reporting on the mob that chanted calls for his death is a tool to "demean" Trump supporters.

For his part, Trump has continued to falsely claim the election was stolen and he was merely exercising his right to say so on Jan. 6.

Judges have expressed concern that the ongoing misinformation will lead to a similar attack. Walton said he and other D.C. judges have gotten threats from people who continue to believe the election was stolen, even though no such evidence has emerged in dozens of audits and court cases around the country.

"Both of you were gullible enough that based on statements being made — for which there was no proof to support — that the election was unfair. You all bought into it, hook, line and sinker," Walton told Lori and Thomas Vinson, a western Kentucky couple who pleaded guilty to parading in the Capitol. "And unfortunately, those same things that I assume motivated you to do what you did are still being said."

Thomas Vinson, an Air Force veteran, told Walton that he and his wife had "no intention" of joining a mob on Jan. 6 and would do nothing like it again; previous Trump protests they attended were peaceful.

"I took an oath and I know I violated that oath," Vinson said. "Joe Biden is our president, he was sworn in; that's all I can say about it."

Through attorneys, defendants have blamed Trump and his rhetoric for inspiring their behavior. But others continue to see their fate through a partisan lens.

Former model Nathan DeGrave, who is accused of fighting police to get inside the Senate chamber, said through an attorney in March that he was "mortified and remorseful."

"This is certainly the first time a sitting president has claimed that a presidential election was fraudulent, that the election was stolen, and that his supporters needed to come to the Capitol to 'fight like hell,'" his attorney wrote in that filing.

But DeGrave, who has pleaded not guilty, replaced that attorney with a conservative lawyer who is representing more than a dozen Jan. 6 defendants. On a fundraising website, he now describes himself as a "political prisoner" in jail "because he is a Trump supporter" who took part in "a peaceful protest, until police attacked nonviolent participants."

(In a brief interview from jail, DeGrave said there was "culpability on both sides.")

Sibick's father, Eugene, has joined those protesting the treatment of Jan. 6 defendants. At a demonstration in September, he claimed there was violence during racial justice protests in the summer of 2020 that was "more egregious than what happened here, and those people were let out." While some cases from racial justice protests were dropped, hundreds were not. Most federal defendants generally are detained; only about 13 percent of the Jan. 6 defendants are.

Amy Berman Jackson, the judge overseeing Sibick's case, said recently that if a D.C. resident was caught on video doing what Sibick did and faced four felonies, pretrial release would not even be up for discussion. But on Oct. 26, she released Sibick, citing a recent mental illness diagnosis, jail guards' praise of his model conduct behind bars, and his efforts to distance himself from more radical prisoners. In a handwritten letter from jail, he told the judge the events of Jan. 6 were "a disgrace to our nation."

The blame, he said, lay "ultimately" with the president he once followed to the Capitol.

	<p>“While many praise Trump, I loathe him, his words and actions are nefarious causing pain and harm,” Sibick wrote. “I have vowed never to attend another political protest in my life, that was my first and last! In addition, I will never allow myself to be consumed by the mob mentality, it is dangerous.”</p> <p>The word “never” was underlined twice.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Bus rampage in Seattle; no charges yet?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/2-weeks-after-a-bus-rampage-in-seattle-the-suspect-still-hasnt-been-charged-heres-why/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/2-weeks-after-a-bus-rampage-in-seattle-the-suspect-still-hasnt-been-charged-heres-why/</a>
GIST	<p>It’s been two weeks since a 21-year-old Seattle man was arrested for allegedly <a href="#">stealing an unoccupied bus</a> in Sodo and intentionally ramming numerous vehicles at high speed before crashing into a bus stop in Judkins Park on Oct. 26.</p> <p>Despite a judge’s finding that the man posed a danger to the community, he was released from jail on Oct. 29 and has yet to be criminally charged. The reason? Seattle police detectives have yet to submit paperwork to support the filing of criminal charges to the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office.</p> <p>The Seattle Police Department’s ongoing staffing crisis, coupled with a temporary personnel shuffle to cover for 93 officers seeking medical or religious exemptions to the city’s COVID-19 vaccine mandate, are the apparent reasons behind the delay.</p> <p>Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan required <a href="#">all city employees working on-site</a> to be vaccinated against COVID by Oct. 18 — and Interim Seattle Police Chief Adrian Diaz mobilized the department <a href="#">in anticipation of that deadline</a>.</p> <p>As of September, <a href="#">more than 300 officers</a> had left SPD in what Diaz has called <a href="#">“an unprecedented exodus.”</a> with many former officers citing lack of support from city leaders as a reason for their departure in the wake of last year’s civil rights protests and subsequent calls to defund the police. Only about 100 officers have been hired.</p> <p>From Oct. 13 through Nov. 5, Diaz ordered a “stage 3 mobilization,” requiring detectives in many specialty and support units across the department to shift to patrol duties to ensure there were enough officers to respond to 911 calls, said spokesman Sgt. Randy Huserik.</p> <p>It’s not that cases won’t be referred to prosecutors for criminal charges — they just haven’t been sent over yet, since detectives only returned to working their caseloads on Monday, Huserik said.</p> <p>Huserik hasn’t received a recent update on officers who had sought vaccine exemptions.</p> <p>The case involving the man who is alleged to have stolen a bus from a Sodo-based transportation company, caromed into cars and forced pedestrians to scatter during a 3-mile-long police pursuit is being investigated by SPD’s General Investigations Unit, whose detectives were also pulled into patrol duties in recent weeks, Huserik said.</p> <p>“If that case were sent to us, we would’ve reviewed it (for a charging decision) the same day we received it,” said Casey McNerthney, a spokesperson for Prosecutor Dan Satterberg.</p> <p>Police <a href="#">said at the time</a> that the bus smashed into vehicles in the Beacon Hill and Central District neighborhoods before crashing at a light-rail construction site near 23rd Avenue South and South Judkins Street. The driver fled but was quickly arrested.</p>

The next day, Oct. 27, a King County District Court judge found probable cause to hold the man on investigation of theft of a motor vehicle and second-degree assault with a deadly weapon and set the man's bail at \$200,000, according to prosecutors.

But Seattle police did not refer the case to prosecutors for a charging decision within 72 hours of the arrest, and so the man was released from the King County Jail on Oct. 29 without being required to post bail, according to prosecutors and jail records.

Under state law, defendants cannot be held in custody for more than 72 hours, not including weekends and holidays, if criminal charges have not been filed against them. The Seattle Times is not naming the man because the newspaper typically does not name people who have not been charged with a crime.

According to the probable-cause statement outlining the Seattle police case against the 21-year-old, he was working as a temporary detailer for TransWest, a Sodo-based company that operates a fleet of vans, shuttles, buses and coaches. (Though the stolen bus was initially reported to be a school bus, it was actually a white commercial bus in the TransWest fleet.)

He was hired Oct. 25 and the next morning, he arrived at a TransWest lot on South Spokane Street, went to a maintenance shed and asked for keys to one of the vehicles, says the statement, noting witnesses later reported the man was "jittery" and "acting strange." After receiving keys, the man allegedly got into a bus and sped off the lot at an estimated 30 to 40 mph.

Another employee stood near the lot's entrance and waved his arms above his head in an attempt to slow the driver, says the probable-cause statement. The employee's leg was injured after getting caught in the bus's bumper and he later told police he would've been killed had he not moved out of the way.

During a 7-minute pursuit over 3.1 miles, Seattle police officers "witnessed him intentionally swerving in and out of traffic and oncoming traffic to hit vehicles," the statement says.

The driver of the stolen bus struck a Metro bus and then steered toward a bus stop, where several people were forced to flee, says the statement. In addition to hitting at least 15 other vehicles, the stolen bus crashed into the bus stop, it says.

Before being booked into the King County Jail, the man was evaluated by a police drug-recognition expert, who determined the 21-year-old had been driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, according to the statement.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Violent criminals get sentenced in King Co.</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3227145/dozens-violent-criminals-sentenced-weekly-king-county/">https://mynorthwest.com/3227145/dozens-violent-criminals-sentenced-weekly-king-county/</a>
GIST	<p>Feel like King County and Seattle are soft on crime? There's much more to the story, especially when you start talking about crimes committed by someone with significant behavioral issues or involuntary treatment — and places like Western State Hospital or agencies like the state Department of Social and Health Services (DSHA) are part of the equation.</p> <p>But, with jury trials back on the calendar after being on hold for months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, King County prosecutors are working their way through the massive backlog of cases.</p> <p>In fact, Casey McNerthney with the prosecutor's office says, on average, they have about 60 or so cases where a conviction has been secured that go to a superior court judge for sentencing each week.</p> <p>This past week, there were about 60 cases on the sentencing calendar, including two related to hate crimes or attempted hate crimes, and two random attacks that you've likely never heard of because often they don't make headlines, even though they probably should.</p>

“On Friday, we had a guy, Malachi Robertson, who was accused of a hate crime ... who attacked Metro drivers and pleaded guilty to attacking one of them, and also was convicted in a separate residential burglary that was tied in the sentencing on Friday,” McNerthney said. “It was a pretty disturbing case. He was accused of screaming the n-word and using racially charged language and swearing at them. He spit on one of the drivers and hit one in the face, according to police, and he admitted to threatening one of the drivers who’s Black just because of his race.”

Robertson pleaded guilty to maliciously and intentionally threatening one of the drivers, who is Black, based on his perception of the driver’s race. During the same time period as the hate crime, Robertson also engaged in a residential burglary. Robertson has a criminal history, but these felony cases were the first of his ever referred to the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, which asked for a 17-month sentence.

A second case that went to sentencing Friday involved a man who attacked a security guard and later pleaded guilty to an attempted hate crime.

“This guy — David Lyle Morton — he admitted that when he was being escorted out of Swedish Hospital in Ballard after being medically cleared, he admitted to attacking an Asian-American security guard, using anti-Asian slurs, and charging at him after the security guard had tried to de-escalate the situation,” McNerthney said.

Lyle Morton pleaded guilty to an attempted hate crime, and he’s already been in jail since June. He was sentenced to have an alcohol and substance evaluation and a mental health evaluation.

“Substance abuse and mental health is often a common thing that we see with people who commit hate crimes, but it’s also not an excuse to. So in this case, we thought it was important for them to be a part of the sentence. He’s got to get those evaluations within 60 days. And so he had a suspended sentence because of the time that he’d already spent in jail,” McNerthney explained.

Two other people sentenced in the Friday sentencings were convicted on assault charges for random attacks the prosecutor’s office says have, sadly, become common place in the region.

In one case, a man named David Skiffington stabbed another man outside of a Ballard church when he was eating breakfast, then took off and fled toward Ballard Commons Park before eventually being arrested. On Friday, Skiffington was sentenced to 43 months for second-degree assault for that attack.

He notes that there are cases like this “all the time” that don’t make headlines.

“We’ve heard a lot of the concerns from folks in Ballard about what’s happening, what’s being done. That, understandably, is a case that didn’t make news because, unfortunately, some of these cases are kind of routine, but it’s also routine for the prosecutor’s office to get convictions in these cases and to take them to court,” McNerthney recalled.

The final case KIRO Radio is highlighting from last week involved an attack on a Washington State Ferries worker.

In April, David Catalano walked up to a woman at Coleman Dock who was working for Washington State Ferries and, without provocation or warning, lifted a butane torch toward her face and sprayed her with lighter fluid, causing severe pain, according to court records. Catalano was also being sentenced Friday for a separate assault case for an incident in Seattle’s Chinatown-International District.

“In that case, he was darting in and out of traffic with a gas can when he was approached by two police officers after trying to take the side mirror off a car,” McNerthney said. “The officers, believing he was a danger to himself and others, tried to stop him before Catalano bit two of the officers.”

Catalano pleaded guilty and was being sentenced on third-degree assault in both cases. These were the first felony cases he had that were referred to the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office.

“In one of those cases he was given three months,” McNerthney recalled.

But McNerthney says it’s important to know that’s based on the sentencing guidelines set by the state.

“The state says, for somebody with that kind of conviction, with that kind of criminal history, you get three, eight months in jail, which people might say that’s not enough when you randomly attack somebody like that,” he said. “But that’s the best we could do. And we hope that people are least reassured that we did that and we got the conviction. We think that is the best kind of justice that we can get within the guidelines we have from the state.”

Those are calculated based on sentencing guidelines the Legislature creates and which set ranges of time a judge can sentence someone to based on their offender score, a number calculated by — among other things — a person’s criminal history.

“All the sentences that we see are influenced by somebody’s previous criminal history. If you’re a first time offender, it’s a lot different than if you have a rap sheet with five felonies or 10 felonies,” he said.

On any Friday, McNerthney says people can go to the courtrooms in the downtown courthouse or in Kent at the Justice Center and see these kind of sentences.

“It might be reassuring to know that we’re in the courtrooms getting those sentences,” he said.

Because not all cases do end up in the courtroom, or even charged.

“We don’t have the option to go and say, you know what, let’s just give it a shot like a roulette wheel and see what we get on this one. We can’t ethically do that. We can only bring a case when we believe we can prove it beyond a reasonable doubt. Every day, we file around 25 to 35 cases, both in Seattle and in Kent. One thing that we’re trying to do weekly is do a summary ... of each of the cases that we charge because there is a perception that we are light on folks,” McNerthney said, adding that’s just not the case.

That perception has definitely been made worse by the pandemic, given the months of jury trials on hold and the massive backlog of cases it created. This is not just an issue in King County either, it’s a statewide and nationwide issue, according to McNerthney, but it is improving locally.

“The backlog has gotten better, but we’re still in the red,” he said. “We really, in every county across the nation, whether you lean blue or lean red, it is something about the pandemic and not being able to put a jury in a jury box that really slowed things down. But that doesn’t mean that we’re going to ignore repeat criminals, it doesn’t mean we’re going to ignore violent crime. We’re going to be thoughtful about it. We’re going to prioritize the people who are repeat offenders and who are violent, but we were doing that before the pandemic too.”

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 New York is closing 6 state prisons</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/nyregion/prisons-closing-new-york-hochul.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=New%20York">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/09/nyregion/prisons-closing-new-york-hochul.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=New%20York</a>
GIST	<p>New York officials on Monday announced plans to close six state prisons early next year, one of the largest such closings by the state as its prisoner population continues to decline.</p> <p>With the closings, Gov. Kathy Hochul is following the lead of her predecessor, Andrew M. Cuomo, who shut 18 prisons during his nearly 11 years in office amid a series of criminal justice reforms that reduced New York’s prison population to its lowest level since 1984.</p>

Prison closings have typically been contentious in New York because the facilities are major employers in the upstate communities where many of them have shut down, even as criminal justice reform advocates view the moves as the fruits of long-running efforts to end mass incarceration.

But the closings announced on Monday coincide with a heated political debate over the effect of left-leaning measures on public safety, with New York's Democrats still [reeling from their losses in elections across the state](#) last week.

Republicans were quick to attack Ms. Hochul, a Democrat from the Buffalo area, over the decision, portraying it as an affront to prison officers, and seeking to tie the closings to measures like changes to the state's bail laws that have been used [as a cudgel against Democrats](#).

"Closing prisons is an idea that might appeal to liberal voters in a primary, but it's of no benefit to upstate communities and represents yet another step backward on public safety," said Will Barclay, the Republican minority leader in the State Assembly.

The closings announced on Monday were tied to this year's state budget, which was negotiated in March between Mr. Cuomo and the Democrats who control the State Legislature.

It was unclear whether Ms. Hochul would follow through with the moves when she took office in August, but she hinted last month that she was exploring the possibility of using some of the facilities for other purposes.

"I want to get creative with this," Ms. Hochul [said then](#). "I don't know if something can be used as a substance abuse treatment center. We don't need as many prisons."

State officials said on Monday that the state would work to "reuse" the closed prisons, but did not offer details.

The closings come as the state's prison population has dropped to 31,469, a 56 percent decline from a peak of 72,773 in 1999. The sharp decrease is partly a result of the dismantling of the state's strict 1970s-era drug law and laws that allow early release for nonviolent offenders.

The six prisons that will close are well under capacity: Taken together, they can fit up to 3,253 people, but now house just 1,420, all of whom will be transferred to other facilities before closing in March 2022.

The move is expected to save taxpayers \$142 million, officials said, adding that the closings would not result in layoffs. Instead, the state will work to shift the roughly 1,700 workers who are employed at the six prisons to other facilities or agencies.

Michael Powers, the president of the New York State Correctional Officers Police Benevolent Association, said the union opposed the closings, adding that the state was saving money while doing little to protect correction officers who, he said, had suffered an increase in violent attacks.

"Where is the reinvestment in the facilities to make these prisons safer working environments?" Mr. Powers said. "At some point, the state needs to realize that these choices are more than just buildings and tax-saving measures, these are life-altering decisions that upend lives and destroy communities."

State officials picked the six prisons, most of which are upstate, after analyzing factors that included their proximity to other facilities where staff members could be moved and whether they were in parts of the state where previous closings had already affected the local economy. Also taken into account was recent state legislation passed by Democrats that is meant to curb the use of solitary confinement and limit the number of people who are sent back to prison for technical parole violations.

The largest of the six prisons being closed is Downstate Correctional Facility, a maximum-security prison in Dutchess County in the Hudson Valley, which can fit up to 1,221 people, but is operating at 56 percent capacity. The smallest is the Rochester Correctional Facility, which holds up to 70 individuals.

State Senator [Peter Harckham](#), a Westchester County Democrat, said he hoped the money saved through the closings would be reinvested in drug-treatment options for prisoners, one driver of reincarceration.

“If we want to end the revolving door of people going in and out of prisons and end recidivism, we have to seriously address substance-use disorder and mental health issues, while folks are incarcerated,” Mr. Harckham said.

Two prisons are to be closed in the North Country region, where six other prisons [have closed](#) since 2009, including two earlier this year, resulting in the [loss of hundreds of jobs](#).

On Monday, Representative Elise Stefanik, a Republican who represents most of the area, urged Ms. Hochul to “reverse course,” saying that the closings would “devastate our region.”

“Targeting multiple North Country prisons is an attack on the hard-working residents of the North Country,” Ms. Stefanik said.

Criminal justice activists welcomed the closings, but nonetheless said Ms. Hochul should use her clemency powers to release more individuals, and urged the Legislature to pass legislation that would lead to additional releases.

“Without these measures, and despite these closures, thousands will continue to needlessly languish behind bars,” said Jose Saldana, the director of the Release Aging People in Prison Campaign. “Tens of thousands of Black and Latinx families are counting on New York’s leaders to bring their loved ones home.”

New York will have 44 state prisons after the closings announced on Monday take effect in March.

When he became governor in 2011, Mr. Cuomo closed seven prisons, including two in New York City, calling it a priority for a state traversing a fiscal crisis and declaring that “an incarceration program is not an employment program.”

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Rochester shooting: 4 teens injured</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxnews.com/us/rochester-shooting-leaves-4-teens-hospitalized">https://www.foxnews.com/us/rochester-shooting-leaves-4-teens-hospitalized</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">Police</a> were investigating Tuesday night after a <a href="#">shooting</a> in Rochester, <a href="#">New York</a>, left four teenagers hospitalized.</p> <p>No arrests had been made by early Wednesday, WROC-TV in Rochester reported.</p> <p>The victims were identified as two 16-year-old girls, one 15-year-old girl and a 15-year-old boy.</p> <p>They were shot on the corner of Henion and West Main Street near a gas station.</p> <p>Another 16-year-old girl was also hospitalized following a shooting in a different part of the city, <a href="#">WHEC-TV</a> in Rochester reported.</p> <p>"Certainly we are understaffed and certainly this is a stressful time," Rochester Police Lt. Michael Ciulla said, according to <a href="#">WROC</a>. "But the members of the Rochester Police Department are doing a fine job. All shootings are major tragedies but when its victims that are this young, it is especially difficult."</p> <p>No other details were available on the shootings.</p>



HEADLINE	<b>11/09 US pledges to strengthen Haiti police</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-pledges-strengthen-haiti-police-amid-fuel-gang-81068193">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-pledges-strengthen-haiti-police-amid-fuel-gang-81068193</a>
GIST	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- The U.S. government pledged Tuesday to strengthen Haiti's National Police as the country struggles with a spike in gang-related violence and a severe shortage of fuel that has deepened an economic crisis.</p> <p>Todd Robinson, U.S. assistant secretary for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, said the U.S. has provided Haiti's police department with 19 of 60 police vehicles promised and will soon hand out a couple hundred sets of protective gear.</p> <p>He said the U.S. also will work with police to fight gangs and implement community development and violence prevention programs.</p> <p>"Let's be clear. Haiti faces a number of challenges, but gangs are the greatest threat to citizen stability. The U.S. government takes this threat extremely seriously," Robinson said during a two-day official trip to Haiti, which is still trying to recover from the July 7 presidential assassination and a 7.2 magnitude earthquake that struck the country's southwest region in mid-August and killed more than 2,200 people.</p> <p>He said the U.S. will work with other government authorities: "But, at the end of the day, it's not going to be the international community that comes to Haiti's rescue. It's going to be Haitians."</p> <p>Robinson added that the U.S. does not plan to send troops but is working closely with Haiti "to release safely and as quickly as possible" the 16 U.S. citizens and one Canadian who were kidnapped on Oct. 16. The leader of the 400 Mawozo gang who abducted the missionaries with Ohio-based Christian Aid Ministries has demanded \$1 million ransom per head.</p> <p>Hours after Robinson spoke, top government officials in Haiti held a press conference to talk about the widespread lack of fuel blamed on gangs blocking gas distribution terminals. The shortage has affected hospitals, schools, public transportation, phone companies, banks, newspapers, radio stations and others.</p> <p>"We are working around the clock to solve the gas crisis," said Justice Minister Liszt Quitel. "The crisis is complicated."</p> <p>On Tuesday, the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti known as BINUH issued a statement saying it was extremely concerned about the lack of fuel and called on all actors involved to do everything necessary to ensure a steady supply of gasoline.</p> <p>"The lack of delivery of petroleum products constitutes a serious obstacle to the provision of essential services as well as to the movement of people and goods," it said.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Defense Minister Enold Joseph said authorities are investigating why 30 fuel tanks dispatched to Haiti's southern region disappeared, noting that he has observed gas being sold on the black market.</p> <p>Newly appointed Police Chief Frantz Elbé said authorities are aware that trucks carrying goods such as rice, sugar and cement are passing through gang-controlled territory but fuel trucks are not. He said police have a security plan to ensure gas will be delivered, but he did not elaborate.</p> <p>"We all know that the country is going through a crisis...a political crisis, economic crisis, gangs in the street," he said. "Adding to all that, the police are weakened. ... We worked to sensitize the police to the responsibility they have in this historic moment that this country is going through."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 Capitol rioter seeks asylum in Belarus</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-capitol-rioter-seeks-asylum-belarus-state-tv-81055879">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-capitol-rioter-seeks-asylum-belarus-state-tv-81055879</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- An American who faces criminal charges from the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol is seeking asylum in Belarus, the country's state TV reported, in a move that could further heighten tensions between the turbulent former Soviet nation and the United States.</p> <p>Evan Neumann of Mill Valley, California, acknowledged in an interview with the Belarus 1 channel that he was at the Capitol that day but rejected the charges, which include assaulting police, obstruction and other offenses. The channel aired excerpts of the interview on Sunday and Monday, and promised to release the full version on Wednesday.</p> <p>"I don't think I have committed some kind of a crime," said Neumann, 48, according to a Belarus 1 voiceover of his interview remarks. "One of the charges was very offensive; it alleges that I hit a police officer. It doesn't have any grounds to it." Neumann spoke in English but was barely audible under the dubbed Russian.</p> <p>Both Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin have used the Jan. 6 riot as a way to accuse the U.S. of a double standard in criticizing other countries, including Russia and Belarus, for cracking down on antigovernment protests</p> <p>Belarus was rocked by months of protests after election officials gave Lukashenko a sixth term in the 2020 balloting that the opposition and the West have denounced as a sham. The government unleashed a violent crackdown on the protesters, arresting more than 35,000 people and badly beating thousands of them. The crackdown elicited widespread international outrage.</p> <p>Putin likewise has come under criticism from the West over the imprisonment of opposition leader Alexei Navalny, the detention of thousands of demonstrators protesting his arrest, and the outlawing of Navalny's organizations as extremist. In an interview with NBC in June, Putin suggested that the hundreds of people arrested for rioting at the U.S. Capitol were being subjected to "persecution for political opinions."</p> <p>U.S. court documents state that Neumann stood at the front of a police barricade wearing a red "Make America Great Again" hat as supporters of President Donald Trump tried to force past officers. Prosecutors say Neumann taunted and screamed at the police before putting a gas mask over his face and threatened one officer, saying police would be "overrun" by the crowd.</p> <p>"I'm willing to die, are you?" prosecutors quoted Neumann saying to the officer.</p> <p>Police body camera footage shows Neumann and others shoving a metal barricade into a line of officers who were trying to push the crowd back before he punched two officers with his fist and then hit them with the barricade, according to court papers.</p> <p>Neumann was identified by investigators after someone who said they were a family friend called an FBI tip line with Neumann's name and hometown. He was charged in a U.S. federal criminal complaint, meaning a judge agreed that investigators presented sufficient probable cause that Neumann had committed the crimes.</p> <p>Messages left for family members of Neumann in Northern California were not returned Tuesday.</p> <p>Neumann is one of more than 650 people who have been charged for their actions on Jan. 6, when pro-Trump rioters attacked the Capitol building and delayed Congress' certification of Joe Biden's Electoral College victory.</p> <p>Neumann told Belarus 1 that his photo had been added to the FBI's most wanted list, after which he left the country under the pretense of a business trip. Neuman, who owns a handbag manufacturing business, traveled to Italy in March, and then through Switzerland, Germany and Poland before arriving in Ukraine and spent several months there.</p>

	<p>He said he decided to illegally cross into neighboring Belarus after he noticed surveillance by Ukraine's security forces. "It is awful. It is political persecution," Neumann told the TV channel.</p> <p>Belarusian border guards detained him when he tried to cross into the country in mid-August, and he requested asylum in Belarus. Belarus doesn't have an extradition treaty with the U.S.</p> <p>"We've seen Belarusian state media reporting about this individual Evan Newman," State Department spokesman Ned Price said in Washington.</p> <p>"Due to U.S. privacy laws, we're limited in what we can say about individual U.S. citizens," he added, and referred questions to the Justice Department, which said it doesn't comment "on the existence or nonexistence of requests for apprehension to foreign governments."</p> <p>The Belarus 1 anchors described Neumann as a "simple American, whose stores were burned down by members of the Black Lives Matter movement, who was seeking justice, asking inconvenient questions, but lost almost everything and is being persecuted by the U.S. government."</p> <p>In a short preface to the interview, the Belarus 1 reporter also said that "something" made Neumann "flee from the country of fairytale freedoms and opportunities" — an apparent reference to the U.S., which has levied multiple sanctions against Belarus over human rights abuses and its violent crackdown on dissent.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/09 FBI: suspected serial killer in custody</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/suspected-serial-killer-arrested-series-slayings-weeks-missouri/story?id=81053101">https://abcnews.go.com/US/suspected-serial-killer-arrested-series-slayings-weeks-missouri/story?id=81053101</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>A "suspected serial killer" has been taken into custody with the semi-automatic pistol he allegedly used in multiple slayings within weeks in the St. Louis area and in Kansas City, Kansas, according to the FBI.</p> <p>In September there were six shootings from the same handgun (according to the shell casings) in St. Louis County and in St. Louis City, in which four people were killed, Richard Quinn, special agent in charge of the FBI's St. Louis Division, said at a news conference Monday.</p> <p>The St. Louis city and county crimes were within two weeks, according to a probable cause affidavit.</p> <p>On Sept. 12 a victim was waiting at a bus stop when he was shot from behind without warning, the affidavit said.</p> <p>The next day, a victim was fatally shot in the head and arm, according to the affidavit.</p> <p>On Sept. 16, one victim was shot in the face and survived, while another victim was shot in the head and killed, the affidavit said.</p> <p>The final deadly shootings were on Sept. 18 and Sept. 26, the affidavit said.</p> <p>Witnesses and a victim provided a description highlighting "some unique physical characteristics" of the suspect, Quinn said, but then law enforcement ran up against "a little bit of a wall."</p> <p>Quinn credited police in Kansas City, Kansas, for sharing the identity of a suspect in two fatal shootings -- 25-year-old Perez Reed -- with St. Louis city police. The FBI was then able to compare the information and link the cases, Quinn said.</p> <p>On Oct. 28, Reed, who lives in St. Louis, took an Amtrak train from St. Louis to Kansas City, Missouri, according to the affidavit. That night, surveillance video showed a victim holding an apartment building door open for Reed, and video showed the two going into the victim's apartment together, according to the affidavit. That victim was found dead on Nov. 1, the affidavit said.</p>

On Oct. 29, Reed was spotted on surveillance video entering the same apartment building, according to the affidavit. Reed also gave his driver's license to security staff at the building, the affidavit said. A second victim was found dead in her apartment on Nov. 2, shot in the head and upper back, the affidavit said.

The FBI called Reed a "suspected serial killer."

Reed was arrested on Friday while on a train from Kansas City, Missouri, to St. Louis. He was taken into custody without incident when he got off the train in Independence, Missouri, the FBI said.

Reed had a .40 caliber semi-automatic pistol with him when he was arrested, the FBI said, adding that the weapon matched the shell cases in St. Louis and St. Louis County. The handgun also matched casings at the scenes in Kansas City, St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Wesley Bell said.

The victims don't appear to be connected, investigators said, calling the shootings "random acts."

Reed was apprehended by an FBI task force and is being held in federal detention, Bell said. He was charged federally with interstate transportation of a firearm with intent to commit a felony.

Reed told investigators after his arrest that he found the gun in Jennings, Missouri, and took it to Kansas with him, the affidavit said. Reed admitted to knowing one of the victims but he denied hurting anyone, the affidavit said.

Reed made an initial court appearance on Monday. He waived a detention hearing and a preliminary exam has been set for Nov. 22.

Reed was charged in St. Louis County with two counts of first-degree murder, one count of assault and three counts of armed criminal action, Bell said, adding that he faces more charges in other jurisdictions.

Reed hasn't entered a plea.

Reed's attorney told ABC News via email Tuesday, "I am waiting on both the federal and state prosecutors to turn over all the evidence/police reports they have so that I can start preparing Mr. Reed's legal defense."

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HEADLINE	<b>11/09 France: 3 more arrests in police stabbing</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.politico.eu/article/france-police-arrest-three-suspects-cannes-stabbing/">https://www.politico.eu/article/france-police-arrest-three-suspects-cannes-stabbing/</a>
GIST	<p>Three people thought to be linked to the suspect who <a href="#">stabbed</a> a police officer in Cannes on Monday have also been arrested and taken into custody, according to French police.</p> <p>"They are relatives, one of the people worked for him and another housed him," a police source told <a href="#">Le Parisien</a>, adding that the assailant owned "a small masonry company."</p> <p>The 37-year-old suspect, named as Lakhdar B., an Algerian national according to his passport and holding an <a href="#">Italian permit</a>, attacked police officers in a vehicle Monday outside Cannes police station. Law enforcement officials said he carried out the attack "in the name of the Prophet" Muhammad.</p> <p>A search of the suspect's home on Monday "did not reveal any elements of radicalization or membership in a jihadist organization," said the public prosecutor's office in a statement.</p> <p>The suspect was "totally unknown to the intelligence services," said Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin, who traveled to the scene Monday. He "had applied for a residence permit in France" which was not granted, Darmanin added.</p>
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